

“Breaking” Social Identity through Diverse Relational Web:

The case of Moldovans in Romania

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Abstract

In the present thesis I analyze social identity of Moldovans in Romania and the impact of personal relational web on identity deconstruction for the case of Moldovans in Romania. Combining different theoretical approaches I design a model which allows to explore empirically into the character of social identity of Moldovans in Romania and to observe if a specific type of personal relational web influences identity deconstruction. In order to respond the addressed question I rely on secondary data from Barometer of Public Opinion in Moldova (IPP 2012) and on primary data (questionnaires and interviews) gathered for Moldovans in Romania. Results show that Moldovans do have a different social identity from Romanians and that identity can be influenced by a diverse personal relational web. Moldovans have different perception about themselves at the both, fundamental and additional group beliefs levels. At the level of fundamental group beliefs, Moldovan social identity can be “weakened” if a person will have a relational web which includes Moldovans and Romanians alike, and if he has no preference with whom to interact or whom to trust.

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Introduction

The 20th century can be characterized as a century of permanent border change in Europe. The two world wars, the apparition and evolution of diverse supranational bodies such as Soviet Union or Yugoslavia, and more important the dissolution of those multinational states lead to a permanent process of border change. As a result of those border changes one could live in three different countries during their lifetime without leaving their home village¹. These permanent borders redrawing also lead to a situation where the same ethnic groups are separated and live in different countries without participating or consenting on that. That is the case for Russians in eastern Ukraine, Baltic countries, Moldova; Serbs in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo; Romanians in Moldova and Ukraine, Hungarians in Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia. As a part of another state and administration those groups maintained their ethnical characteristics but at the same time develop different type of identity and group beliefs.

After the fall of Soviet Union the debates over identities, construction, deconstruction, accommodation of identities for the Eastern Europe intensified. One of the authors who address the particular issue of identity change in post-soviet space is Pal Kolsto. In his work he is arguing for the fact that instead of seeing Russian diaspora in post-soviet space as a unitary body we should research it as fourteen different Diasporas (Kolsto, *The new Russian diaspora - An identity of its own? Possible identity trajectories for Russians in Former Soviet Republics* 1996). Kolsto's argument relies mainly on the empirical evidence from post-soviet states which indicates that Diasporas with different backgrounds will have different type of identification and desires. Somehow complementary to Kolsto, David Laitin is presenting in details how different social backgrounds, combined with a specific type of national state will

¹ One can look for example at Bucovina, at the present moment a part of Ukraine, till 1918 this region was under Austro-Hungarian administration, between 1918-1940 – part of Romania, from 1940 part of Ukraine.

produce different types of Russian diaspora depending on country they were living (Laitin 1998). As one can observe, the main theoretical debate at the present moment is centered on the question “How/why different identities emerged even within the same ethnic groups?” While the main theoretical debate is going along these lines, it would be useful to go beyond and to observe how the constructed identities are deconstructed, if they do so? In other words, how robust can be a constructed identity which is not drawing on “ethnicity” as criteria for delimitation?

Another important part of the debate on the field is linked with the “ways” through which identities come to change. In order to observe what type of identity occurred and how it is different from others, Laitin (Laitin 1998), Kolsto (Kolsto, Political construction sites : nation-building in Russia and the post-Soviet states 2000), Barth (Barth 1998) are putting more emphasis of the group characteristics as well as at the specific historical background and the big social context in which group is imbedded. On the other hand, authors like Karl Deutch (Deutsch 1953), Erikson (Erikson 1968), Gellner or Rousseau and van der Veen (Rousseau and Van der Veen 2005), bring into discussion the individual/personal networks as an important aspect of measuring or evaluating the way a specific type of identity emerged. The present research aims to go in-deep with the analysis of identity deconstruction by analyzing the personal networks of individuals. In my research I will rely on definition formulated by Laitin’ which presents social identity as “labels that people assign to themselves (or other assign to them) when they claim a membership (or are assigned membership) in a social category that they (and other, whenever members of the group or not) see as plausibly connected to the history and the present set of behaviors.” (Laitin 1998, 16)

In order to address the questions raised before, thesis will inquire into the case of Moldovans (Bessaarabians)² who came to Romania. Just as Russians in former soviet republics in relation to Russia, Moldovans share the same ethnic characteristics as Romanians (language, religion, and traditions). However, due to the specific historical evolutions Moldovans who lived outside Romania, where exposed to a different political and institutional background. Like in the case of Russians from the “near abroad”, Moldovans could be considered an ethnic group that developed a different social identity compared to Romanians due to the historical evolution and different political backgrounds (Kolsto, National integration and violent conflict in post-Soviet societies : the cases of Estonia and Moldova 2002). As a result of educational policy promoted by Romanian government toward ethnic Romanians from abroad³ young people from Moldova were encouraged to apply for a scholarship in Romania and go to study in Romania. This specific situation is very interesting first of all because we can see the process in a broader context, of immigration encouraged by ethnic similitude (Hungarians from Romania in Hungary, Croats from Serbia in Croatia) but also because it allows for observing how robust a constructed identity is, when it is not encouraged by ethnic differences.

Having this interesting case for Moldova we however lack important research on the subject of Moldovan identity and identification especially outside the country. This fact could be seen as an important gap because Moldova is characterized by high mobility of its citizens. Mostly because of the economic situation in Moldova, but in some cases also because of study opportunities abroad, Moldovans choose to emigrate. Some estimates of the total number of the emigrants outside exceed 800.000 (Schwartz 2007), comparing to the country

² I will use terms Moldavians and Bessarabians interchangeable. Bessarabia is the other name for the Moldova used in Romania in order to differentiate between Republic of Moldova and Moldova region in eastern part of Romania.

³ <http://www.dprp.gov.ro/2800-de-locuri-in-universitatile-de-stat-romanesti-pentru-tineri-de-origine-romana-din-r-moldova-din-alte-state-invecinate-si-a-etnicilor-romani-cu-domiciliul-stabil-in-strainatate/>

population of 3.55 mil citizens⁴ one can observe that more than ¼ work or study abroad. This fact denotes a high mobility of the population which in contrast with emigration destinations offers us a very interesting case for study. Although the main emigration countries are Russia, Italy, Spain (Schwartz 2007) the present research aims to observe Moldovans in Romania for the fact that Romanians are not an ethnically different group, thus we can test for the question stated before. According to some estimates the approximate number of Moldovans in Romania is 18.000. Nevertheless I would be very cautious with those numbers because of the citizenship policy promoted by Romanian government. According to a study made by Soros Foundation Romania, from 1994 to 2010 approximately 250,000 Moldovans obtained Romanian citizenship⁵. Certainly not all of them moved to Romania, nevertheless we should pay attention to the fact that we can have a bigger number of Moldovans in Romania which are not taken into account by official statistics just because they entered the country with Romanian passport.

In order to be able to investigate in a scientific and empirical manner the problem raised in the introduction I will address following questions in my research:

1. Do Moldovans have a different social identity from Romanians?
 - Which are the main identity differences/similarities identified by Moldovans?
2. Does a diverse personal relational web influence identity shifting?
 - Will a diverse relational web modify the social identity of Moldovans?

While answering the first question I will rely on literature and on primary/secondary empirical data, then the answer for the second one, I will rely completely on the empirical data analysis and will represent the most important contribution of the present paper. In order to be able to address and answer the questions raised above I will separate my work in

⁴ <http://www.statistica.md/category.php?l=ro&idc=103&>

⁵ http://www.stiriong.ro/library/files/raport_cetatenie_ro.pdf

distinct parts which will address different aspects. In the first chapter of the present research I will present mainly the historical evolution of “Moldovan Identity” as such, presenting it in a broader historical context. In the second chapter, the present research will address mainly the theoretical debate over social identity’s construction/deconstruction, formation, evolution, and the main definitions of identity and social networks/personal relational web. In order to place the present research within the existing theoretical debate, I will construct and explain my theoretical argument in the third chapter. Although it is not stated explicitly, during all of the first three parts I will present and engage with literature which discusses identity/social identity and networking/personal relational web. The theoretical part will be followed by methodological part. In the fourth chapter I will present the operationalization scheme of the main variables along with the tools used to measure each variable. Also in this part I will discuss the type of sampling used along with possible metodological limitations of the study. The last chapter will be dedicated mostly to the analysis of data gathered, which would imply the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data and certainly the hypothesis testing.

Chapter 1. Picturing “Moldovan Identity”

The case of Moldova is interesting for several reasons. To start with the fact that Moldova is a country which got through serious territorial, political and social changes during the last centuries which influenced very much the process of identification and identity construction of its inhabitants. Being separated from Principality of Moldova⁶ in 1812⁷ it was included in the Tsarist Empire. As a component of this structure Moldova was administered according to the Russian legislation and the official language in the region was Russian. Also a strong policy of colonization was promoted in order to increase support for the Russian administration in the territory⁸. In 1918 as a result of dissolution of Tsarist Empire, and the post-World War I situation, Moldova united with the Romania⁹. From 1918 till 1940 and from 1941 till 1944, the territory between Prut and Dniester was administered by Romania, official language and alphabet changed to Romanian, Latin respectively (Milescu-Spătaru 2002). After the defeat in the Second World War, Romania was forced to retreat from Moldova and Moldova became a Soviet Republic. During this period a strong policy of creation of a Moldovan identity, different from Romanian was promoted and enforced in Moldova by soviet officials (Muntean 2002, 198). In 1989 a strong movement for liberation from soviet dominance and unification with Romania started in Moldova. Enforced by that, but also by the examples of other soviet republics, Moldova declared its independence on 27th of August 1991. However, the future orientation of the country remained very unclear, different forces pushing for different scenarios, some were advocating for unification with

⁶ Principality of Moldova was composed from Republic of Moldova, Moldova region from Romania and north-eastern part, called Bucovina. In 1859, the principality of Muntenia and the principality of Moldova (without Republic of Moldova) united and formed the basis of modern Romania.

⁷ <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/388005/Moldova/42828/The-Russian-administration-1812-1917>

⁸ ibid

⁹ This moment is also known as the creation of Great Romania, along with Moldova, Romania achieved unification with Transylvania, Bucovina and Southern Dobruja.

Romania, some for building of an independent Moldovan state, some for strengthen ties with Russia.

Here I would like to remark some important factors which influenced evolution and construction of particular types of identity in Moldova. In this respect I would address some of the ideas formulated by Charles King in his article from 1994 (King 1994). Although it is already 19 years since he wrote the article, it is quite important to look at some of his arguments closely because it was back there, at the beginning of 90' when the debate over national identity was framed, and from where it continued to evolve. King starts his inquiry from a close analysis of historical background of the region; I will not go into detail on this issue since a historical overview was already presented. What I would like to discuss with respect to King's arguments is the political situation from Chisinau at the beginning of '90s. As he is presenting it, political spectrum at the beginning of '90 in Moldova was represented mainly by two different forces: National Front and Agrarians. If the period '89-'90 was characterized by a general mobilization for the independence, then the following years were divided, according to King, along pro-unionist and pro-independence issue (King 1994, 345). While the first position was represented by Popular front and was supported by intellectuals the second was mostly composed from agricultural nomenclature. Although both movements played an important role in the establishment of the independence of Moldova, they differed very much with regard to future orientation. Popular front advocated very much for the unity of culture and language, therefore they also sustained the unification with Romania option. On the other hand, Agrarian party members, although recognizing the independence, advocated, along with the former soviet ideology, on the difference between Moldovans and Romanians. As King is arguing, that fact was strongly related with the fear that they will lose all the benefits they had in the present system after the unification (King 1994, 352). In this respect we can argue that between two options, Moldovans, although indirectly, elected

independence. As King rightly observes, Popular Front lost its support during the 1994 election in favor of agrarian party (King 1994, 356). Even the president, Mircea Snegur, who tried to distance at the beginning of '90 from the "Moldovanists" position, changed his discourse and supported the idea that Moldovans are different from Romanians (King 1994, 355). The change in electoral support, along with the change on the official level denotes the fact that national building process in Moldova was far from being over. More, as we can observe from King's arguments none of the parties had any clear idea where Moldova should go further, nevertheless the idea that Moldovans are not Romanians seems to be used already at the beginning of '90. From there on the political situation from Chisinau changed not so much with respect to the question of national identity. There is still the unsolved problem with the official language, which can be one of the most eloquent examples of frozen national building process. Although the Constitution of Republic of Moldova states that the official language in Moldova is Moldovan¹⁰, children in schools are taught Romanian language, a fact which by itself indicates quite clearly on the problems with national building process.

The differences in opinion toward Moldovan identity go even further than politics. It is interesting to observe two different perspectives from two Moldovan authors in a book edited by Pal Kolsto. (Kolsto, National integration and violent conflict in post-Soviet societies : the cases of Estonia and Moldova 2002). In this book Igor Munteanu (Munteanu 2002) and Alla Skvortsova (Skvortsova 2002) wrote two chapters, each of them dedicated to a different issue, but one can easily observe that from the beginning the authors start from radically different assumptions, which they are arguing through their chapter. While Igor is starting from the assumption that Moldovans are in the essence Romanians, with specific particularities, Alla on the contrary, pictures Moldovans as totally different from Romanians, holding just few common variables. There is no clear understanding where Moldovans should

¹⁰ <http://www.presedinte.md/const.php?page=8100>

go and weather they are Romanians or not. All in all, the situation is unclear till now. Being exposed to so many transformations and evolutions, Moldovans represent an interesting and important case to observe. Having these specific particularities the present case can be included also in a broader trend of identity struggles in Eastern Europe. Maybe one of the most eloquent can be the national identity struggle in Ukraine where the national building process is not over either, and where pro-Russian views are opposed by pro-Ukrainian. Another case which can be researched under the same theoretical and methodological framework is the case of Hungarians from Ukraine, Romania or Serbia, which are entitled to receive citizenship, but which have a different social and political background which influence in an important way their social identity. In this respect, studying Moldova can encourage and offer a basis for some possible further comparative analysis on different cases.

Chapter 2. Identity and Networking. Mapping the Theoretical Debate

2.1 *Social Identity and Diverse Networking*

Before starting the inquiry into the main theoretical debate on identities and personal relational web, I will introduce the main expectance and the relationship I would like to explore in a detailed manner. It is argued throughout the literature that identity is constructed from our daily interactions; we can even say that we are what we “eat” during our daily interactions. Since it is argued that identities are constructed from daily interactions can we expect them to be also deconstructed by daily interactions? We can expect identities to be robust to social interactions. From the moment a person start a discussion he or she is predisposed to an interaction network which will influence or change his perception about the self. Let us just have a brief look on what identity is. After all, as Laitin is arguing, it is the labels people themselves, or other peoples, assign to them (Laitin 1998, 16). We certainly cannot expect those labels to be rigid and static; those can be influenced by the changing daily interactions. In this context social identity can be deconstructed if it is exposed to a diverse relational web. Here it is important to highlight the term “diverse”, a homogenous relational web can be quite big, but at the same time quite useless in deconstructing identities. In this sense I expect that by changing our interaction “paradigms” we will be able to change also ourselves. Even though identity is socially constructed it is important to observe that some of them can be more rigid with respect to external factors than others. In this respect, the present thesis take a closer look to a case were identity is not enforced by a strong factor as ethnicity. Although it is socially constructed, or at least we can perceive it as partially socially constructed, ethnicity can have a very strong impact on identity construction or deconstruction, therefore I choose to look closely to a case where identities are not enforced by this variable.

2.2 *Primordialist and Constructivist approach toward identity*

“Identity tends to mean too much [...], too little [...] or nothing at all” as Brubaker puts it (Brubaker and Cooper, *Beyond "Identity"* 2000; 1). Although I agree with the idea that identity could represent to many things, and therefore be a useless term at one particular point, I still believe that it is possible to research identity in a meaningful way if we define and explain the particular aspect of identity we would like to investigate.

Before starting the inquiry in the theoretical fundaments of social constructed character of social identity we should acknowledge that there are mainly two different approaches toward identities. As David Laitin remarks in his book, an important impact toward national idea and national identification was Stalin’s approach to national identities as being inherent to an individual and therefore impossible to change (Laitin 1998, 11). Belonging to one nation or national group was predetermined, according to Stalin’s perspective. This type of approach is known as primordialism (Shils 1957) and it mainly is advocating for the rigidity of identity. In other words it is quite impossible to choose or to construct your own identity which is predetermined. On the other hand we have the opposite perspective, of constructed identity, which argues for the importance of understanding identity constructed like an art object. This perspective, as Laitin presents it, focuses more on the possibility of an individual to choose and construct his own identity, therefore identification relies mainly on construction and choice rather than on blood and inheritance (Laitin 1998, 13-16). Thus we should understand identity not as rigid, racial or cultural reality which is predetermined, but more as a fluid social choice of individuals. In the same direction it would be useful to observe Kolsto’s matrix of possible identity evolution for Russian diaspora. In his article Pal Kolsto is presenting 8 different possible identity evolutions for Russian diaspora in the near abroad. Kolsto is arguing that different decisions of the diaspora will lead to different outcomes in terms of their social position and relations with other social groups (Kolsto, *The new Russian*

diaspora - An identity of its own? Possible identity trajectories for Russians in Former Soviet Republics 1996). This particular argument is advocating for the fact that there could be different identities within the same ethnic group. This is important evidence that support also the idea of the present research. Even though that Russians in former soviet republics and Moldovans in Romania have a lot of different features, at the same time we can see some important similitudes. Kolsto is arguing that differences between Russians in former soviet republics occurred as a result of being exposed to different contexts and cultural/social/economic variables. Following the same argument we can say that Moldovans have mainly the same ethnic characteristics as Romanians, the differences stand from the distinct social and political background to which Moldovans and Romanians were exposed during the soviet period but also after the fall of Soviet Union.

While the main bulk of arguments are enforcing the constructivist perspective, we also should take into account the fact that there might be some aspects of identity which are deeply rooted into specific realities which can constitute practically a given part of the identity (Erikson 1968). For Moldovans in Romania the territorial variable could be considered as a quasi-primordial aspect of identity. The present work will operate mainly within the constructivist perspective toward identity, but in the same time will consider carefully the argument about a possible rigid part of the social identity.

2.3 Social Identities

2.3.1 Definitions

The present paper aims to observe how the construction/deconstruction of social identity is influenced by interactions between individuals. In the present work I will refer mainly to the concept of social identity. The main definition on which I will rely is formulated by Laitin'

and presents social identity as “labels that people assign to themselves (or other assign to them) when they claim a membership (or are assigned membership) in a social category that they (and other, whenever members of the group or not) see as plausibly connected to the history and the present set of behaviors.” (Laitin 1998, 16).

Laitin’s definition is quite helpful for my research, but in order to make it clearer and more operationalizable I will combine it with Bar-Tal’s analysis of group beliefs as an expression of social identity. In his article, Bar-Tal argues that social identity should be understood in terms of group beliefs which “[...] are defined as convictions that group members (a) are aware that they share, and (b) consider as defying their “groupness” (Bar-Tal 1998; 36). Developing this idea, Bar-Tal stresses that each group is defined by a specific set of fundamental and additional beliefs. If fundamental beliefs are saw as being the main argument for group existence and constitute the main discursive representation of groupness (ex: we are Bessarabians), then additional beliefs are though as being characteristic to a specific group belonging (ex: as Bessarabians we can speak Russian). It is an important point for the present research because I expect to find both, fundamental and additional beliefs, as a clear component of Moldovan’s social identity in Romania. I would like to highlight an important common point between Laitin’s definition and Bar Tal’s categorization. Laitin remarks that it is important that members of the group regard themselves as being connected to the history of the group and also to the present set of behavior. Bar-Tal’s categorization is clearly speaking about the same idea just in more explicit terms, fundamental beliefs referring mostly to the group history, background, important identification variable, and additional group beliefs referring mostly to the shared set of behavior.

I believe the changing of a specific system of social identities to be a continuous evolution from a very powerful, “hegemonic” group identity to multiple identities or backwards.

Defining “Hegemonic” identity I will refer mainly to the concept of cultural hegemony analyzed by Gramsci (Bullok and Trombley 1999, 387-388). Hegemonic identity in this context will mean dominant identification of an individual with a group, through a specific set of beliefs, cultural norms, values, legends, perceptions, stereotypes. What is important to remark with reference to the idea of hegemonic identity is the fact that it would not be possible for a person who has this strong hegemonic identity to have at the same moment strong competing or complementary identities. In the light of Bar-Tal’s categorization, I would argue that hegemonic identity is characterized by strongly highlighted fundamental and additional group beliefs which at the same time rely on negative view or distrust of the “non-group” members.

While it is certainly important to observe how identity comes to change, it is also important for us to remember that the same individual may have more than one identity at the time (Rousseau and Van der Veen 2005). However it would be quite hard to search for potential alternative identities through questioners since it will require to research for other potential fundamental and additional group beliefs. This is a complex task since in order to identify the fundamental or additional group beliefs you have to ask people on their own, individual perception. Because of these causes I will pay attention not so much to the multiple identity schemata, but more at the weakening of main hegemonic identity.

2.3.2 Identity Shifting/Constructing

It is very hard to find a specific measurement through which to evaluate identity and especial variation in it. Different authors understand different things through identity. What is even more puzzling is the fact that the word “identity” is used as well as a category of practice, which can lead to an overlapping with category of analysis. In this context it is argued that

identity tends to mean too much in some cases, to less in other or nothing at all in the third case (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 1). Nevertheless I believe that through the definitions and discussion on the main concepts the meaning and the way through which I will approach identity was made clear. The overlapping of category of practice and category of analysis in the present work is prevented by the fact that identity, as a concept or a word will be excluded or minimized during data collection stage. Through that I expect the respondents to answer to the variables through which I have operationalized identity without referring to the actual identity as a category of practice.

The importance of identity shift for the present research cannot be overestimated. First of all because we expected identity to be on a permanent evolution, as we saw from the existing theoretical debate, individual are in permanent search for identities. Even if they acquire or adhere to a specific identity they always will rethink their social identity in accordance with particular social settings (Erikson 1968). There might be different factors which can influence the identity shifting; certainly none of them can pretend to explain in a complete manner the reasons why and how a specific identity comes to change. However different approaches are focusing on diverse factors as important in explaining identity change. Some scholars focused on the importance of state institution in creating and shifting social identities, other put more emphasis on the cultural and material resources of the entrepreneurs who seek to improve newly formed identities (Laitin 1998, 13). One of the most interesting and complete explanation of identity change is drawn by scholars who examine the impact of the social background conditions on the formation and shifting of an identity putting the emphasis on the networks. In this sense, for example Gellner argues that the industrialization has changed the way in which people interact, their social networks, and through this new kind of industrial relationship and networks, a new national identity had emerged (Gellner 1983). Other important point in this direction is made by Anderson in Rousseau and van der Veen,

he states that “A social network that allows human interaction is necessary for the emergence of a vocabulary, the spread of information, and eventually the emergence of a collective identity.” (Rousseau and Van der Veen 2005, 689). Starting from this theoretical perspective I will observe the impact of social networks on identity deconstruction or weakening. The main argument is that a specific type of relational web produces some characteristics and type of behavior which at one specific moment will lead to the transformation of social identity.

According to Bar-Tal, social identity can be regarded as composed from fundamental and additional beliefs (Bar-Tal and Danies 1998). It will be misleading to argue that a change in an individual’s social reality will lead to a qualitative change of those beliefs. However we can witness a change in importance individual puts on his social identity, how he/she rank a particular social identity. In other words, you still can adhere to the fundamental belief of a specific group but depending on you relations with the others you may consider that of primary importance or choose to neglect it. In the case of the Moldovans territorial affiliation can be one of the hard fundamental group beliefs “We all come from Moldova”. To some degree we can argue this belief to be a constructed one, but the proportion of primordial/constructed argument in this particular case is favoring the primordial argument. At the same time the fundamental belief should be reinforced by the additional ones in order to become salient for an individual. If the individual will lack or will lose other additional beliefs that reinforce the fundamental one, he or she will have a weak sense of social identity defined by the specific fundamental belief. Since we cannot observe a clear moment or instance of identity change, it will be hard for me to measure it in the present paper. I would like to make it clear at this point that in the present research I will not measure identity shifting as such, in order to do that I should have done time-series on same individuals for a long period of time. Since there are no available data in this respect, and I have no real possibility to gather this type of data. Instead of that I will observe how diverse relational

web can weaken the hegemonic identity. Observing the impact of relational web on hegemonic identity will allow us to observe if it is possible to deconstruct social identity through diverse relational web.

2.4 Networks and Personal Relational Web

In the present work I will rely a lot on personal relational web concept. As one could have observed, I choose to work mostly with personal relational web and minimize the usage of social network concept. Although both concepts reflect the same understanding, I believe personal relational web to be more accurate and explicit toward to goal of the present work. Also, because of the evolution of the field, social networking is a broadly used concept with very different understandings from a topic to another, because of that, the usage of personal relational web can be more appropriate for this research. It is a difficult task to find a clear definition of what personal networking as such mean. I choose to work mainly with the definition formulated by Hajdeja Iglič which states that “Personal relational web refers to ties which serves as conduits for political solidarity, communication, and recruitments to different kinds of political organizations and groups” (Iglič 2003, 15). The present definition, although focusing more on the political importance of social ties reflects in the same time the general characteristic of a personal network in my opinion. I would stress especially the importance of relational web in creating patterns of conduits and communication. Linking that aspect with the fundamental and additional group beliefs we can expect the patterns of conduit and communication to reflect or to be incorporated in fundamental and additional group beliefs. Here we can certainly add Karl H. Deutsch’s idea who argued that we are prisoners of our communication networks in that sense that a change in our identity will be possible and eminent when the chance to interact with a person from other group is equal to that of

interacting with a person from the same ethnic group as you (Deutsch 1953). For that matter we can certainly argue that networking is important in shifting not just personal's political views but also individuals' perception about him. However we should understand that political realities can be much more opened to change as compared to identities which are usually much more rigid constructs. In relation with social identity Laitin remarks the importance of the neighborhood, friends and family as well as of the work colleagues for the "tip" or "cascade" identity change. As Laitin is arguing the pressure from the community and the expectation of the others in the network to behave in a specific way will play an important role also in personal decision to assimilate or not (Laitin 1998, 21-23). Thus as we can see, networks and the pressure exercised by the belonging to a specific group can have serious impact on individual or social identity.

In order to measure networking in a complete way I will address three important characteristics of a personal relational web which is argued to have important impact also on the level of social capital an individual hold (Badescu and Ulsaner 2003). Thus I will pay attention to the proportion of kin/non-kin in the personal network, the size of the network, the weight of the network and the trust allocated to a specific network. The number of kin will refer to the number of individual who have the same fundamental value of the "Hegemonic" identity, in other words people who came from Moldova, number of non-kin being all others who are not related to the territory of provenience. The size of the network will represent the number of individuals who are believed to be close to the individual, individuals with whom the respondent may share personal matters. The weight of the network is the third measurement of the networking. Mostly that characteristic refers to the trust allocated for specific types of interactions. This aspect can be linked with the kin/non-kin types of network. However, the trustworthiness of a network represents a purely qualitative measurement, which addresses the predisposition to trust someone who might not be the

member of the network or vice-versa. The operationalization scheme and the measurement scale will be addressed in a more detailed manner in the following chapters.

Chapter 3. Developing Theoretical Argument

3.1 Deconstructing Hegemonic identity through diverse relational web

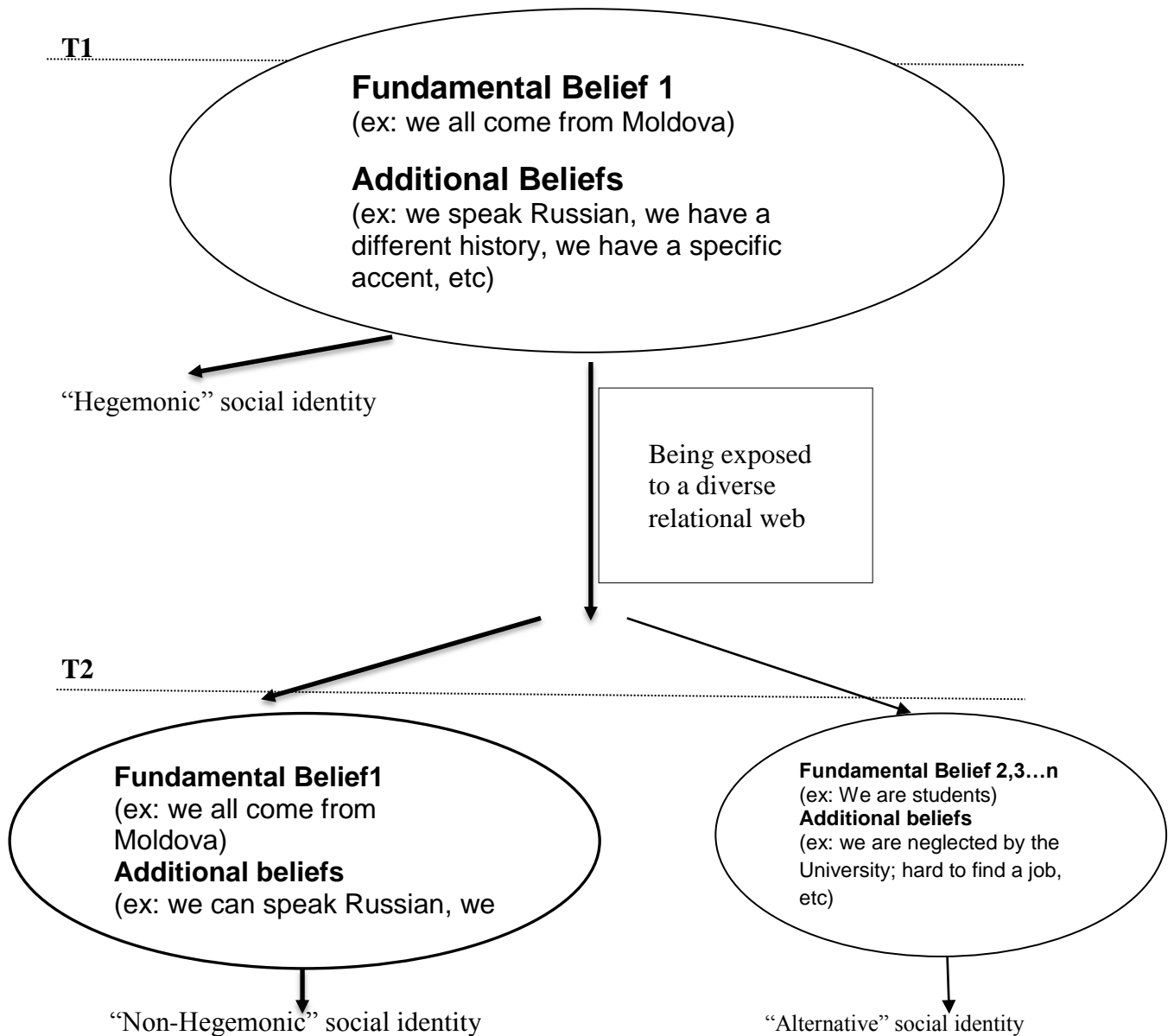
For the present research I preferred to construct a completely new model, combining different theoretical perspectives and arguments. That is one of the novelties of the present research since I am not applying a developed model, rather constructing a completely new one which brings together different theoretical perspectives. Also the model is designed in a way it can be applied to different cases and is not specifically designed for Moldovans in Romania. Theoretical design does not rest on a specific theory, it is more problem driven one since even the puzzle researched in the present paper was not researched explicitly before, thus the building of the model required also a new approach.

Relying on the theoretical debate presented above I will explain in the present part the logic of my theoretical argument. Referring to Deutsch and Anderson (Deutsch 1953), I believe social networks/personal relational web to be an important factor in construction of identity. Moving forward from that, I expect diverse personal relational web to lead to the deconstruction of social identity. Construction and deconstruction of social identity should be understood as a continuous process of identity shifting. Therefore diverse personal relational web can work on both sides of identity shifting.

Through the weakening of the hegemonic identity we will encourage also the construction of other possible categories for identification. In this respect, this specific type of identity schemata, with a weakened hegemonic identity, resembles the cross-cutting identities described by Tom Risse (Risse 2004, 153).

I believe the following scheme to offer the best visual representation for my argument.

Figure 1 Theoretical Argument – Schematic Representation



The present scheme should be understood as a simplified frame of the main theoretical argument. Deriving concepts from the theoretical debates, it represents a simplification of the argument in order to make clear the way in which the paper and the research will go. Evolving from the theoretical debate, we can observe that at the moment T1, social identity is characterized by the presence of a clear fundamental belief (FB1) which can be characterized

by specific factor, in the case of Moldovans in Romania that can be the territory from which they come. Additional beliefs (AD1) reinforce the fundamental belief. In this case, when there are no alternative strong fundamental beliefs, all the additional beliefs will converge to reinforce the only one that exists. At the T1, the individuals which will rely mainly on one fundamental group belief, and all other additional group beliefs which are composed from legends, values, perceptions, stereotypes. This type of social identity is a “Hegemonic” one because the identification with a specific group will be dominated by the hegemonic structure built around the FB1. Being exposed to a diverse relational web the individual will tend to diversify his/her field of interaction. As a result of the possible new fundamental beliefs which would emerge from different social contexts (student, sportsmen, employee, etc.) the individual will rely on different additional beliefs and engage in different social schemata, which at their time will weaken his/her FB1. This particular situation does not mean that FB1 will disappear, because it has a possible primordial character it will remain as a possible category for identification. However, by diversifying the interactions and possible categories for identification individuals will deconstruct their hegemonic social identity to the level of a non-hegemonic, non-dominant identification marker.

Relying on the theoretical argument and on the existing works on Moldova, the present research aims to observe two specific aspects:

1. *Do Moldovans from Romania have a different social identity from Romanians?*

H1: Different social and political background of Moldovans will lead to a different social identity they would have in Romania.

2. *How robust is a social identity which lack ethnicity as a fundamental component?*

H2: A diverse relational web will lead to the weakening of the “Hegemonic” social identity.

H2.1: A diverse relational web will lead to the weakening of hegemonic identity through fundamental group beliefs

H2.2: A diverse relational web will lead to the weakening of hegemonic identity through additional group beliefs

The first question is addressing the findings of Charles King for Moldova (King 1994). Already in 1994, King observed the problematic situation with the construction of national identity in which Moldovans found them, different forces trying to promote a specific identity project. As King was already arguing in 1994, the pan-Romanianism project was not fulfilled in Moldova, and peoples were not supporting national front already at that moment. It was a strange situation at that particular point since the main fight for independence was built on the arguments of similitudes with Romanians and reunification with Romania. In this respect the first question inquires closely in the fundamental issues of identification and possible social identity for Moldovans. I will try to answer this question both by relying on other empirical works, secondary data from Moldova and primary data gathered in Romania.

Although the first question is certainly an interesting one it is not central for the present thesis. It is very helpful however in introducing the second, main question of this research, can we deconstruct a socially constructed identity? And if so, how can we do that? Answering these questions I will rely on questioners and interviews gathered during my research. I will observe if personal relational web can have any impact on the deconstruction of social identity by using quantitative and qualitative data sources.

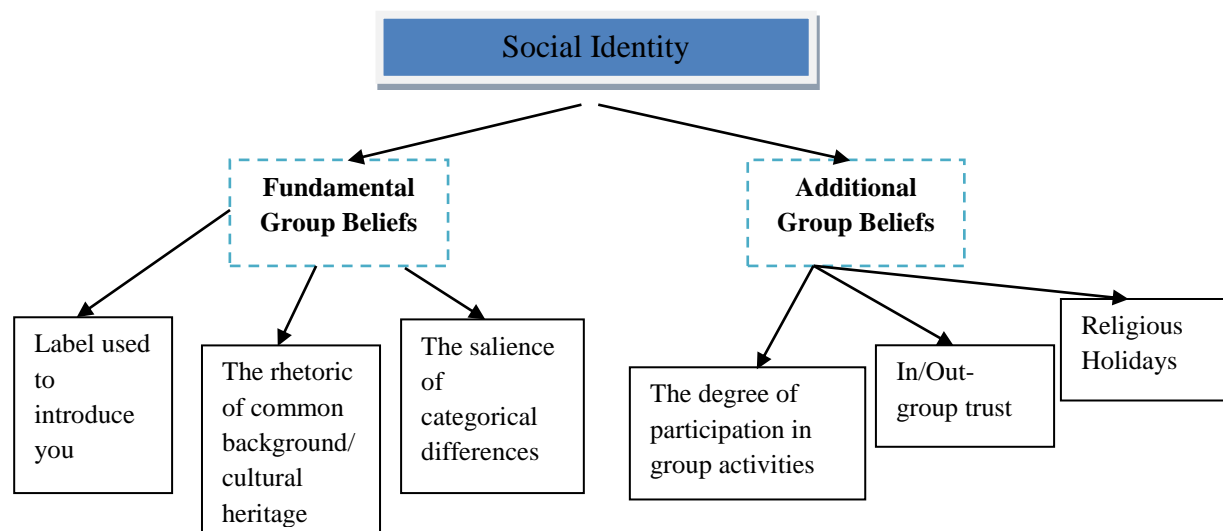
3.2 Concept operationalization

In order to explain and simplify the methodological scheme of the present research the operationalization model which will address explicitly the way I have interpreted the main

concepts and also will be a support in linking the measurement tools (questioner and interviews) with questions asked will be introduced in the next part.

The main two variables/concepts the present research relies upon are social identity and networking. Both of those concepts were defined during the theory review, in this part nevertheless I would like to make a connection between definitions and measurements. Social identity, as it was defined is consisting of two main components: *Fundamental Group Beliefs* and *Additional Group Beliefs*. Fundamental beliefs, as it is argued throughout the literature consist of the main identification “light-motives”. Fundamental group beliefs usually play a role of a clear social marker which means that it is usually easily identifiable and very clearly stated (“We are Bessarabians”, “We come from Moldova”, etc.). This type of beliefs constitutes the fundamental reason of group existence. Additional group beliefs on the other hand are perceived as a behavioral argument of the group existence, in other words, practices, occupations, customs, traditions, skills, which are characteristic to the group members. Both of those types of beliefs come together in creating the social identity of a person.

Figure 2 Operationalization scheme for Social Identity



Fundamental group beliefs: Represent labels used to introduce you and are related to the perceived category to which people attribute themselves. It is part of the fundamental group

belief because category they would identify is the clear social marker which links them to a specific category/group. The rhetoric of common background/cultural heritage is also clearly related with fundamental group belief because it is used as one of the main argument of the group existence; different cultural or historical background may serve clearly as an argument for a categorical distinctiveness. The last variable through the present research will measure fundamental group beliefs is the salience of categorical differences. It may occur that persons will label themselves in a specific category, but that category could be unimportant for their social identity. We have to regard the construction of specific categories in terms of differences between existing categories. Thus, for the present research, the possible label of being “Bessarabian” would be constructed and reinforced on the expense of “Romanian”. Therefore we can expect that the bigger is the difference between these two categories the stronger is the fundamental belief (in our case Basarabian one).

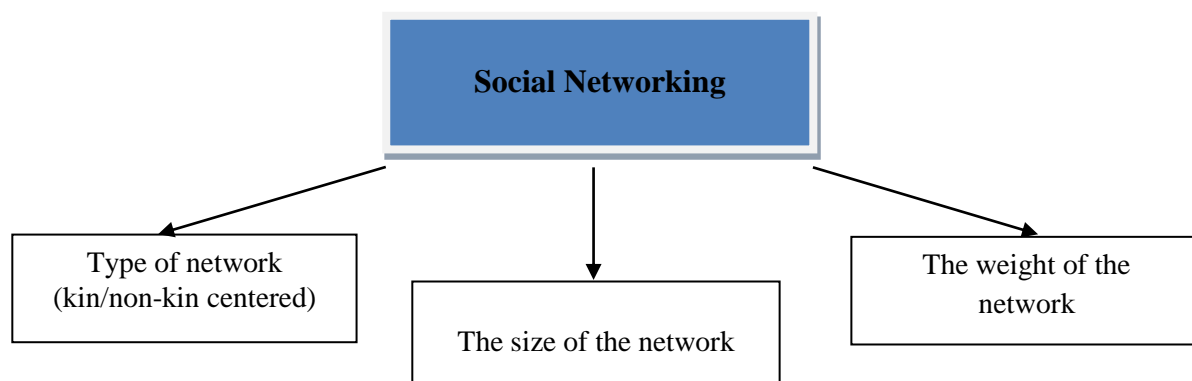
Additional group beliefs: As it is argued, additional group beliefs reflect mainly the behavioral characteristics of a group. Those are expected to reflect some characteristics of a group which are not directly related with their labeling or with background. Because of that this category is operationalized through three different variables: Religious holidays, In/out-group trust and the degree of participation in group activities. Religious holidays are important in the present context, both Moldovans and Romanians are Christian orthodox mostly, nevertheless there is an important difference between the two groups, Romanians are celebrating all the religious holidays according to the Gregorian calendar (new style) and Moldovans are celebrating according to the Julian calendar (old style). It may seem not a very important difference but it is in fact because the religious holidays are also translated in official state holidays, and when Moldovans come to Romania they have their winter break according to the Romanian schedule of celebrating Christmas (25th of December), in Moldova being celebrated on 7th of January. In this way the time of celebration of religious

holidays (even for non-religious persons as long as those are also official state holidays) can represent an additional group belief (choosing to celebrate as a “Moldovan” or as a “Romanian”). The second variable I select to operationalize the additional group belief indicator is in/out group trust. This variable can be associated with the salience of categorical differences which I used to operationalized the fundamental group belief, nevertheless it is different in one main respect, it looks not to the categories and personal definition of those, but mostly to the trustworthiness attributed to the members of different group. By reflecting on that we can say that trustworthiness is understood as a characteristic of individual behavior, in that way people of your own group become trustful because of some characteristics of the group, and others will not register the same score. The third variable which I believe is part of additional group beliefs is the degree of participation in group activities. Additional group beliefs refers to the activities which are not fundamental to the group existence but which are believed to be clear bounded to the group logic of existences. In this sense we can expect people who participate in group activities (parties/ debates/ festivals/ trainings/etc.) to reinforce their own social identity through practicing and consenting to the salience of the additional beliefs.

Questions 1, 3, 4a, 4b and 8 from the questioner operationalize three variables which are argued to constitute fundamental group beliefs. Questions 9, 10,11 and 12 on the other hand address the three variables through which additional group beliefs were operationalized (see appendix 2, Measurement tool 1).

Personal relational web is the independent variable which I expect to have an impact on the rigidity of the social identity. I will present briefly in this part the scheme through which I had operationalized social networking concept.

Figure 3 Operationalization scheme for Social Networking



Discussing the type of network I will observe if individual networks are constructed around people from the same social group. In my case a kin-centered network will represent a network which will be composed mainly from bessarabians. This variable should not be interpreted without other two, it is important to observe it as a part of the complex picture. By itself the type of network can tell us little information about a person's social network, and in this respect it is important to interpret it together with other two variables.

The size of the network is a numerical indicator which can tell us how big the networks of the respondents are. There is no absolute value with which we could have compared the network size. Thus, the results from our questioner could serve as a relative indicator; taking the mean value for the network size we can compare it with others. There is no a clear expectance of how big or small a person's network should be.

The last variable which is important to take in account measuring social networking is the weight of the network. Together with the network size and the network type, the weight of particular interactions can give us a lot of information of the type of social networking which is characteristic to a particular individual. By the weight the present paper will understand the salience of specific interactions and the amount of trust invested in those interactions. As Hajdeja Iglič pointed out in her study, we can expect that interactions characterized by a high level of trust, implying personal matters to be considered as stronger and more important for

a person than those which are not implying trust or personal matters (Iglič 2003, 19-23). In this way, borrowing money from a specific person, or discussing important personal matters with one of your friends may indicate that the interaction with that persons are more important for you. In the present case, I would like to observe if the weight of the network is related with other characteristics of personal relational web, and also with the type of social identity. Weight of the network is an important variable to take in account because it brings important qualitative information for the research.

Questions from 13 to 29 from the questionnaires will explore all three important characteristic of the personal relational web (see appendix 2, Measurement tool 1). I have to remark at this point that I will combine some of the variables constructed on the basis of the present cases in order to make the analysis clearer and easier to interpret. Combining them, however, will not affect in any way the quality information gathered.

Chapter 4. Methodological Approach

Along with the theoretical argument, the present work is also relying on an innovative and diverse methodological approach. It is a hard task to measure identity in a quantitative way and very few attempts were made in this sense. The present paper represents one of those attempts; it relies on different sources of data and different approaches in order to answer researched questions. First of all I will look closely at others authors' findings on the same issue, after that I will inquiry into secondary data in order to check those findings in the current context. At the last stage I will work with empirical data, questionnaires and interviews, in order to test my hypothesis. Present research will apply diverse research strategies, descriptives' analysis from secondary and primary data, regressions and in-depth interview analysis.

4.1 Case selection – Why is Moldova Important?

I would like observe the impact of the diverse personal relational web on identity deconstruction of Moldovans in Romania. There are three main reasons for selecting Moldovans in Romania. First of them is related to the possibility to include the case in a broader spectrum of similar cases from Eastern Europe. The general trend in which we can include Moldovans in Romania is characterized by the existing of similar ethnic groups with different identities which were constructed by the different political, educational or social backgrounds. Here we can remark Hungarians in Romania, Ukraine, Serbia or Slovakia; also we can observe the case of Russians in post-soviet republics. Therefore studying Moldovans in Romania should not be interpreted as the study of an isolated case; mostly it should be interpreted as a research on a case from a broader trend. The second reason is the lack of

research on Moldovans in Romania, although Moldovans are characterized by high mobility, the specific case of Moldovans in Romania was under-researched. The third reasons of taking specifically Moldovans in Romania is related to the research practicalities. Being an interesting case from a broader picture, it is also accessible for me as a researcher. Knowing the language and being a part of the process I can improve the quality of my research at least in two respects: the quality of the gathered data and the possibility of having participatory observation in my study.

Referring specifically to the case of Moldovans in Romania I can say that till last year there were no quantitative researches addressing Moldovans in Romania. At the end of 2012 nevertheless a report of a study made by European Center for Studies of Ethnic Problems from Bucharest (European Center for Studies of Ethnic Problems 2012) appeared. The study is discussing about possible identity trajectories for Moldovans in Romania. Although the study had some discussions started none of them is directly linked to my thesis. I have to remark that I tried to contact institution in charge of the study and some of responsible for the research in order to ask access to the data they have gathered, but unfortunately I was unable to establish connections with any of the persons responsible for the present study. Also I have to remark that the report includes just some summarizing findings, with few data about the methodology and with a little exploration of the data, mostly the conclusions. In this respect I preferred not to reflect very closely on the present study as long as few details were presented and the conclusions weren't enough in order to take a close look at the research.

4.2 Population, Sampling and Measurement Tools. Moldovans in Romania

Probably one of the most predisposed to critique points of the present work is the sampling procedure. To start with the main argument, it is complicated to have a random sampling for

an unknown population. In order to know the numbers of Moldovans who are residents in Romania I wrote a letter to the Moldovan embassy in Bucharest. The official response reported around 16.000 officially registered Moldovans in Romania in 2012. The problem was nevertheless, as the embassy also presented it, that much more Moldovans entered Romania on the basis of Romanian citizenship, which can be obtain by almost all Moldovans if they are able to prove that they had relatives living on the territory of present Republic of Moldova during the inter-war period (when it was Romania). In this sense there are a huge number of Moldovans who got Romanian citizenship (according to other Soros Foundation Romania reports more then 250,000¹¹). Having this big number it is hard to find out how many Moldovans are *de facto* in Romania, since many of them could entered the country with their Romanian passport.

The present research will rely on a “snow-ball” sampling procedure for the questioners as long as no other possible alternative is available, first of all because we cannot know the entire population and secondly because even for the approximate number of Moldovans in Romania we know, there are no accessible sources of data in order to have a random sampling procedure. In order to ensure the best results possible for the “snow-ball” sampling procedure I will try to improve the sampling and the results of the sampling in two ways. First I would have three different “entry-points”. I will apply questioners to the people I know and to start from them to spread the questioner, second point will be through organizations which represents Moldovans in Romania (GIB, ASEB¹²) and in the third instance I will ask the embassy to give me contact of possible representatives of Moldovan diaspora in Romania.

Secondly, I will gather data (questioners and interviews) just in two cities in Romania: Cluj-Napoca and Bucharest. I choose these two cities because those are the biggest cities of

¹¹ http://www.soros.ro/ro/comunicate_detaliu.php?comunicat=187

¹² Group of Bessarabian Initiative from Cluj-Napoca (www.GIB.ro), Association of Bessarabian Students and Pupils from Bucharest (www.ASEB.ro)

Romania and the biggest university centers ¹³. As it is argued also in the study made by European Center for Studies of Ethnic Problems, most Moldovans in Romania are students; therefore we can expect to find them in the biggest university centers. Also taking just two cities and having around 100 questioners per each will allow me to have enough cases as not to run into the problem of having more variables then cases, thus having no space for variation.

Referring to the interviews, which would be my secondary importance data source, I will have interviews with the leaders of the bessarabian organizations in Cluj-Napoca and Bucharest. The reason for selecting them is related with the fact that we can consider them as elites, representatives in some sense of the Moldovan community in Romania, thus it would be interesting to explore during the interviews specific aspects which will come from the questioners and which may help me in answering the research questions. At the opposite part I would like to have interviews with young students, who are in their first year of studies and just came to Romania. Certainly that would not ensure that I would find the profile of a person with a small, undeveloped personal network, nevertheless we can expect that in their first year in Romania, they still have their personal networking developing. Thus having leaders of such organizations and young students in in-depth interview can help me explore some of the main aspects brought to light by questioners in a meaningful way.

The main source of data for the present research is the questioners I gathered during 2 month. As it was already discussed within the questioners I will have questions that will address the most important of the researched variables. The number of questioners I have gathered is 170 (100 for Cluj-Napoca and 70 for Bucharest). The main task of the questioners is to grasp the

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<http://www.insse.ro/cms/rw/pages/index.en.do;jsessionid=27927116f3654fcb835a91a5fa35bf3d96a0bdb6e8a343a3f7e998f6f6d0dca9.e38QbxSahyTbi0Oc310>

broad picture and to give some important quantitative information about relationship between personal networks and the deconstruction of the hegemonic identity¹⁴.

Complementary to the questionnaire I will use also in-depth, semi-structured interview. Although I will have some basic questions to start guide the discussion, the interviews will be at least partially exploratory since I would like to explore identification issues which the interviewee believe important to remark. Interviews will not allow me to generalize on the result but can bring a qualitative part of the information. Interviews will be a useful tool since identity is a very complex concept, and even through the questioner it will be difficult to grasp all important elements which can characterize social identity of an individual. In this respect, interviews will be complementary data which will allow me to go in-deep with specific issues and find some more problematic aspects of social identity.

¹⁴ Full translated questionnaire in Appendix 2, Measurement tool 1, Questionnaire.

Chapter 5. Are Moldovans different from Romanians?

Data analysis shows us that Moldovans certainly perceive themselves different from Romanians. They do identify important similarities, but at the same time Moldovans do not see themselves as Romanians. In this way I can say that H1 holds to be true for the researched case. In this first part of my analysis I will support this position by presenting Kolsto's (Kolsto, National integration and violent conflict in post-Soviet societies : the cases of Estonia and Moldova 2002) and King's (King 1994) arguments and discussing them. After that I will bring some descriptive data from the Barometer of public opinion from Moldova (IPP 2012) which supports the main finding. In the last part I will discuss also the results from the questionnaires and interviews I have applied. The last part will be helpful not just in supporting the H1, but also in explaining why that occurred and where the differences are rooted according to the respondents.

5.1 *Constructing Identity at the High Political level*

Moldova was mostly studied and researched with respect to the ethnic conflict which erupted at the beginning of 1990 on the left bank of the river Dniestr. Although studies discussed the national building process they have not discussed explicitly identity construction process. However I believe it important to pay some attention to those studies since even then the authors remarked political discourses which promoted the idea of difference between Romanians and Moldovans.

Moldova went through a series of territorial and political changes during the last 100 years of its history which influenced in a considerable way the identification of its citizens. Being a part of Tsarist Empire, Great Romania, Soviet Union and in the end an independent republic

left an important mark on the identification process for its citizens. Kolsto is rightly pointing that the armed conflict from Transnistria was fueled mostly by symbolic issues, such as language, alphabet or colors of the flag (Kolsto, National integration and violent conflict in post-Soviet societies : the cases of Estonia and Moldova 2002). Promoting liberation values, political forces from Chisinau, relied very much on the proximity between Moldovans and Romanians as one of the main argument in distancing themselves from Moscow. However, as King already remarks in 1994, political actors from Chisinau moved further from pro-unionist position. If in 1989-1990 the idea of unification was strongly enforced (be it explicitly or implicitly) by almost all political forces from Chisinau, then already for the elections of 1994 important political actors (Agrarian Party, the President) opted for the independence and supported explicitly the scenario of building the Moldovan nation, a scenario which seemed more acceptable for the electorate than reunification with Romania, leading to a clear victory of the Agrarian Party (King 1994). From that moment the question on national identity was intensively debated and used in electoral campaigns as an important factor in order to attract voters. In this sense we can say that the battle for identity construction is not over yet in Moldova. Even at the present moment political spectrum is highly divided toward where should Moldova go and who are Moldovans. However already in 1994 political forces from Chisinau tried to promote the idea of difference between Romanians and Moldovans.

5.2 *Moldovans from Moldova – A perspective on Self-Identification*

Both King and Kolstoe are rightly pointing to the fact that identity issues were used by political forces from Chisinau in order to gain electoral support. However, it would be wrong to view this state of affairs just as a top-down process. It is important also to look at the perception Moldovans held about themselves within Moldova itself. Even a brief look on

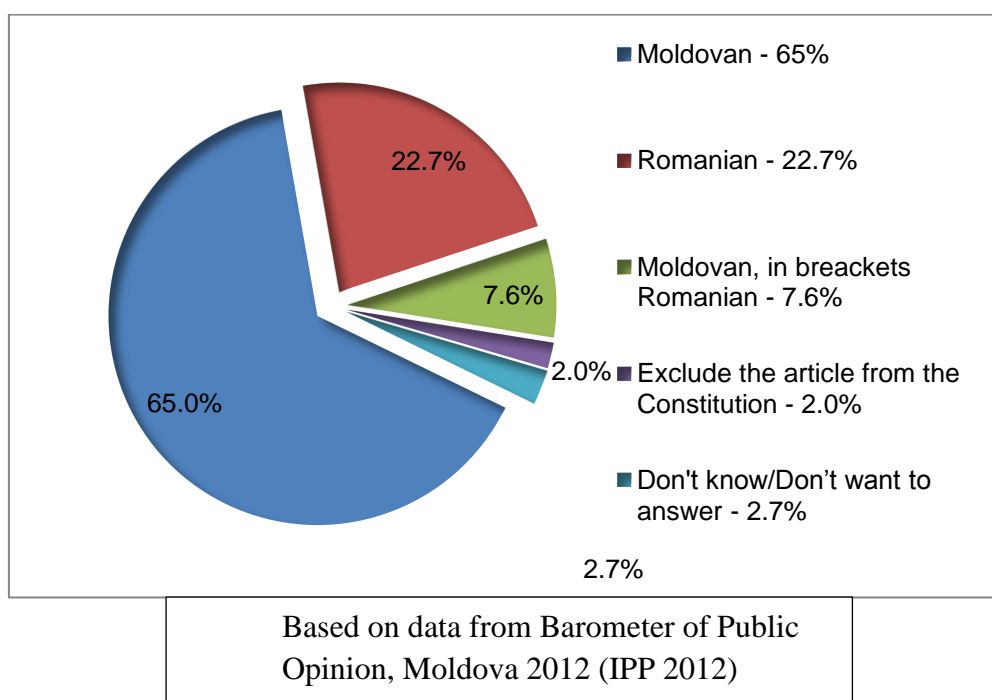
statistical evidences from Moldova will also support the argument that Moldovans perceive themselves different from Romanians.

It is quite difficult to find any statistical data on the identity or identification problem as such. Nevertheless I discuss here two important issues which are strongly related to identification: opinion on official language and future expectation with respect to geo-political orientation. Language is one of the most debated problems in Moldovan society; since 1994 when the constitution was adopted different forces are arguing for different options. At the present moment the official language in Republic of Moldova is Moldovan, as it is stated in Constitution¹⁵. Regardless of this statement there is no academic recognition for this language, in schools only Romanian language, Romanian literature classics and Romanian grammar are taught. The language problem is perceived more as a symbolic issue, and it is presented as a very powerful identification marker for Moldovans. Because of this it is important to observe what Moldovans think about this problem. On the other hand, perception about future external orientation of the country is also strongly attached to identification as such. Very strong ties with Romania can mean a possible desire for reunification; therefore a losing of Moldovan identity, on the other hand, closer relations to Russia seems to support the Moldovan nation building process. In this context it is important also to look what opinions do Moldovans held about the two issues.

In order to observe this aspect of identification I relied on the data from Barometer of Public Opinion from November 2012 (IPP 2012). The question respondents were asked was “What should be the official name of the language in Moldovan constitution in your opinion?”

¹⁵ <http://www.presedinte.md/const.php?page=8100>

Figure 4 Moldovans' attitude toward official language

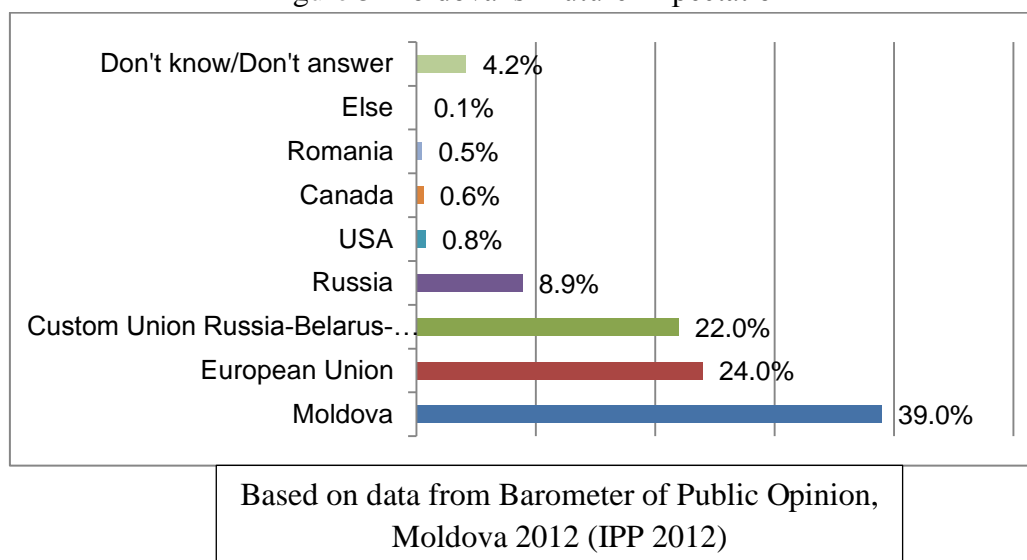


The data clearly shows us that a good majority of Moldovans believe Moldovan language to be the official language which should be written in the constitution. The results also tell us why political actors are supporting Moldovan language construct. Having a big part of voters clearly supporting Moldovan language, political actors will try to benefit from this by placing themselves on the same line. Certainly I would be careful in arguing that the results are supporting the existence of a “well-established” Moldovan identity. Nevertheless, we cannot disregard the fact that majority of Moldova’s citizens consider Moldovan to be official language, although it is not taught in schools or recognized scientifically. Language in the present case is a very important variable since it can be used as a marker for fundamental belief. As we will see further in the present chapter it is used by the young Moldovans from Romania as an important social marker in order to differentiate between Romanians and Moldovans.

The second variable I choose to look is the opinion about future expectations in geo-strategic terms Moldovans held. As I have already argued it is not a clear, straight forward indicator of

a specific identity or identification, however it can tell us which country or union Moldovans perceive as possible future path.

Figure 5 Moldovans' Future Expectation



With regard to their future expectations, Moldovans were asked to choose a location to which they see their future attached. As we can see from the figure 5 very few Moldovans see themselves or their future attached to Romania. As opposed to a possible expectation, especially from the begging of '90 when the idea of unification with Romania was still popular, at the present moment Moldovans do not see their future somehow related or attached to Romania. Moreover, Moldovans see their future attached even more to Russia then to Romania and certainly much more to Moldova as an independent state. This is another strong argument in supporting the idea that Moldovans do not see themselves as Romanians. Without expecting any unification with Romania they believe that in the future they will be either a part of Moldovan state or of a regional organization, be it EU or Custom Union.

If we will look closely at the observation from above through the theoretical framework presented in chapter 2, we can certainly say that at the level of fundamental group beliefs

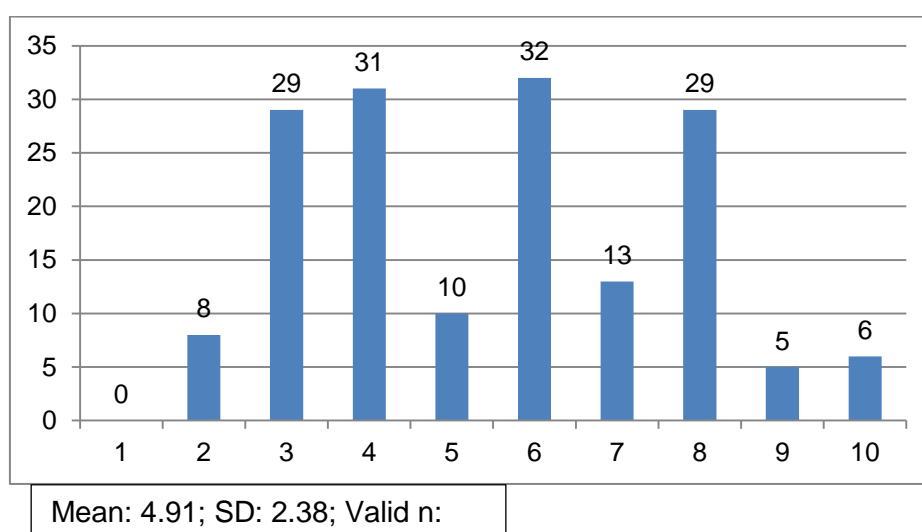
Moldovans display clear identification markers which differentiate themselves from Romanians. As we can see, complementary to the high political level, Moldovans also have very clear fundamental values which differentiate them from Romanians. Thus we can say that both, political discourse and social realities are going along the same lines of constructing and supporting a distinct Moldovan identity or at least identification with Moldovan state.

5.3 *Moldovans from Romania – A Perspective on Self-Identification*

As we could observed Moldovans from Moldova hold some important fundamental group beliefs and Moldovans think of themselves as different from Romanians (at least with regard to language and future expectations). However, the present paper researches the identification process for Moldovans in Romania therefore I examine in this part also the Moldovans' perception about themselves but in this case just for Moldovans from Romania. I have to remark that for this reason I will use descriptives for two questions addressed in questionnaires, which are different from those addressed in the Barometer of Public opinion. For this reason I will not compare the results; my purpose is to go from national level data to the group level, and specifically for Moldovans in Romania.

One of the first questions asked respondents to reflect on was whether Moldovans are different from Romanians (see appendix 2, Measurement tool 1, question 3). As one can see the respondents could give scores from not different at all (1) to very different (10).

Figure 6. Perceived difference between Moldovans and Romanians



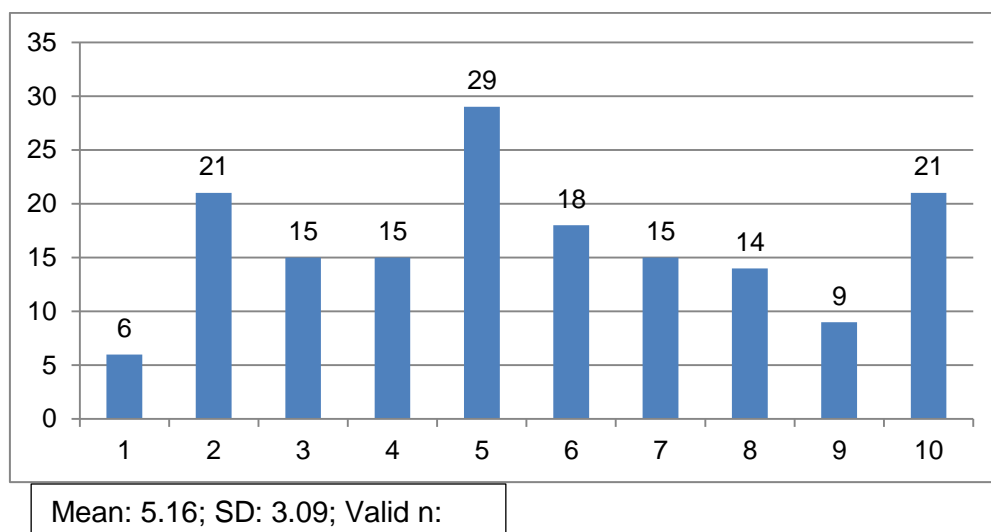
As we can see from the histogram and from the table, the mean is around 5, which tells us that Moldovans perceive themselves as different but not fundamentally different from Romanians. It is interesting to observe that, for example, there are no individuals who would say that Moldovans are not different from Romanians, no one gave the score 1, as compared to the other extreme where we have 5 individuals who consider that Moldovans are very different from Romanians. However excluding the extremes, it is still interesting to see that even though Moldovans were accepted to study in Romania as ethnic Romanians from abroad, they consider themselves different from Romanians.

Exploring this part with the interviews showed that there are important differences at both levels, fundamental and additional group beliefs. Although the interviewee acknowledged the fact that there is no Moldovan language, they all pointed out the fact that Moldovans from Romania are speaking a different dialect, as one of the interviewee pointed out “We have a specific dialect, we can speak Romanian, but when we are speaking with Moldovans we have speaking in a different dialect” (see appendix 2, Table 9). We can see clearly that Moldovans from Romania also perceive the language as different in some way from Romanian. That is a strong fundamental value because it is presented as a very clear and understandable

difference, the accent and the dialect being characteristic to Moldovans. At the level of additional beliefs, one of the most interesting findings from the interviews is the importance of Russian influence. All four of interviewed persons remarked that Russian culture and Russian language has an important impact on their behavior “We are different because we were influenced by Russians, even the holiday are influenced by Russian holidays, like 9th of May” as John is arguing. We can see that it is perceived as a very important difference, which is also enforced by other additional beliefs like education, the habit of keeping the promise. All in all we can say that perceived difference between Romanians and Moldovans is well rooted in both, fundamental and additional group beliefs.

The second matter presented in this part is related to other issue respondents were asked to grade: how much do they agree with the statement that bessarabians are a united and distinct group (see appendix 2, Measurement tool 1, questions 4a). This is another important aspect we should take into account because it refers explicitly to the term of group, therefore the respondents were asked to position themselves not just with regard to abstract concepts of Moldovans and Romanians, but also to think of Moldovans as a possible different group within Romanian society.

Figure 7. Bessarabians - United and distinct group



As in the previous case we can see that the distribution is almost normal, with a high score in the end for the value 10 – very different. The mean is again around 5, which tells us that respondents do not see Bessarabians as a distinct group within Romanian society, but certainly they do not see them as Romanians either. The findings from the questioners are supported also by the responses from the interviews. All four interviewed persons discuss bessarabians as a distinct group within Romanian society, with their particularities. As Iren puts it “Moldovan’s think of themselves as united and helpful to each other”; she is dividing clearly Moldovans from Romanians by stressing the fact that “Romanians are in their country, they don’t have to prove anything, I had to prove that I worth respect”.

5.4 Do Moldovans Hold a Different Social Identity from Romanians?

It is not the central question of the present research but we certainly cannot start the inquiry on the deconstruction of Moldovan identity unless we identified a Moldovan identity as such. Based on the literature, on the empirical evidences from Moldova and on empirical evidences gathered in Romania we can answer positively to this question.

Both, Kolstoe (Kolsto, National integration and violent conflict in post-Soviet societies : the cases of Estonia and Moldova 2002) and King (King 1994), are arguing for the fact that symbolic issues in Chisinau had a great value and were used quite often in political processes. Moreover, those issues proved to have very powerful impact on the electoral campaigns as such. In order to gain electoral support, parties already from 1994, used national building rhetoric, a rhetoric which supported the idea that Moldovans are different in some important aspect from Romanians. And here we can see the example of introducing Moldovan language as official state language in the constitution.

Moving forward we can see that even at the present moment, at the society level Moldovans do not see themselves so attached to Romania or Romanians. On the issue of official state language 65% sustain the necessity to leave Moldovan language as official state language (see figure 2.1.), regardless of the fact that the language as such does not exist. Regarding future expectation, Moldovans see their future more attached to Moldova, EU or Russia, then to Romania. For the Moldovans from Romania we can say that the situation is not so extreme in this sense. Although they are not arguing that Moldovans are completely different from Romanians, they do not consider them as similar either. As we can see from the scores, Moldovans believe themselves to be different to some degree. The statistical findings can be explained by the material from interviews. So we can see that young bessarabian from Romania acknowledge the fact that there are some important similitudes between them and their Romanian colleagues, at the same time they do identify some important difference which are mostly linked to the background experiences. The main differences remarked by the interviewed were related to the dialect and to the background educational variables. All four persons identified important differences at the fundamental group beliefs level but also at the additional group beliefs level.

We can see evidences that Moldovans, be it from Moldova or Romania, do perceive themselves different. They identify some important characteristics that differentiate them from Romanians. Taking in account political discourse, social predisposition, even the self-identification of Moldovans from Romania, we can identify important fundamental and additional group beliefs that may constitute a basis for a social identity.

With the evidences presented we can say that Moldovans from Romania do have a different social identity. For understanding that statement we should observe the process as a whole, from the political struggles on national building process in the beginning of 1990 to the data from questioners and interviews. The difference I expect to find is not rooted in ethnicity,

therefore it is completely understandable that Moldovans do not score maximum on the perceived difference, however, even the scores they give, and the different features they identified presents us with a distinct social identity. The data indicates that Moldovans from Romania do held a different social identity and relating that also with the theoretical argument I believe this identity to be a hegemonic one, especially at the beginning of their studies in Romania. “Moldovan” social identity in Romania has both fundamental and additional group beliefs features. Moreover, all of the interviewed persons remarked that Romanians hold the same impression about Moldovans as of a different social group. All the presented arguments indicate the fact that H1 hold true for the present research and that Moldovans in Romania do have a different social identity.

Chapter 6. Does Diverse Relational Web Influence Moldovan's Social Identity?

After considering carefully the issue of identification for Moldovans in Romania and after observing some important features of a social identity displayed by the Moldovans in Romania I look closely on how robust is this social identity. I believe the saliency or the hegemonic “Moldovan” social identity to be influenced by the type of relational web a person will have. It seems that persons with a diverse network will rely less on their “Moldovan” social identity. Since social identity is composed from two theoretically different variables, fundamental and additional group beliefs, I discuss the impact of diverse relational web on each of these variables separately and to aggregate the findings in the last part of the analysis.

Personal relational web is the independent concept through which explains variation in the dependent variable. The main concept was operationalized through 7 variables: Friends Bessarabians/Romanians¹⁶, daily interactions Bessarabians/Romanians, important personal matters Bessarabians/Romanians, sport activities Bessarabians/Romanians, Roommates Bessarabians/Romanians, Girlfriend/Wife, borrowing money from someone (1-Moldovan, 2-Doesn't matter, Romanian). Although all the variables are important to observe and I will rely on all of them in my analysis I will have to have two different series of regression. From the first series I will exclude the sport and wife/girlfriend variables. That decision had to be made because not all of the respondents played sport or have girlfriend/wife. If I would have included those into the multivariate analysis too many cases had to be excluded due to missing scores. Therefore I decided to have two series of regressions, one with those variables excluded and one where I will include them.

¹⁶ The usage of Bessarabians/Romanians represents the quantitative proportion between the number of Bessarabians divided by the number of Romanians identified with respect to a particular issue.

From all the 7 variables the first five are continuous and reflect the proportion of Moldovans/Romanians; the next two are categorical. “Borrowing money” variable represents a measurement of the weight of the network, its main function is to identify if there the persons make any difference between the groups with regards to its personal network.

For the fundamental beliefs I constructed 5 variables, each of them addressing a specific part of fundamental group beliefs. The questions address 5 issues connected with fundamental beliefs:

1. Perceived difference between Romanians and Moldovans
2. Necessity to promote group characteristic culture
3. Perceived unity and distinctiveness of the group
4. The necessity to use the label (Moldovan)
5. Necessity to interact with people from the same region

It is important to observe that although all five variables are measuring the same concept there are no correlations higher than 0.4 between them.

Table 1 Correlation between fundamental group beliefs variables

	Promotion of own culture	United and distinct group	Label usage	Interacting with people from the same region
Difference between Romanians and Moldovans	0.15*	0.24**	-0.07	0.29**
Promotion of own culture		0.38**	-0.14*	0.36**
United and distinct group			0.04	0.35**
Label usage				-0.10

p - '***' 0.001 | '**' 0.01 | '*' 0.05 | '.' 0.1 |

As one can observe none of the correlations are higher than 0.4, although for social sciences 0.4 is a good score I believe it will make more sense to research the five variable separately and I will have 4 linear regressions and one logistic. The reason why I choose to have five

different analyses as opposed to construct a factor from all five is that I believe it will bring us more information if we will observe each of them separately. By analyzing them separately I will be able to observe on which part of fundamental values diverse relational web has a stronger impact. Another important reason is related with the fact that even though the variables are measuring the same factor, conceptually, all of the address different issues, which is important to explore separately. Because of the stated reasons I ran regression models for each of the five variables instead of constructing a factor out of them and running a regression on this factor.

6.3 Does diverse relational web influence the deconstruction of fundamental group beliefs?

6.3.1 Personal relational web and fundamental group

As stated in the hypothesis H2 and throughout the theoretical argument, I expect that belonging to a diverse relational web to have a serious impact on both, fundamental and additional group beliefs. In order to check that I ran a series of regressions to test the hypothesis and I complemented statistical findings with qualitative data from the interviews.

Table 2. Relationship between Personal Relational Web and Fundamental Group Beliefs
(Without Relationship and Sport Variables Included)¹⁷

	Perceived difference between Moldovan and Romanians	Necessity to promote group characteristic culture	Perceived unity and distinctiveness of the group	Label usage	Necessity to interact with people from the same region
Daily interactions Moldovans/Romanians	-0.32* ¹⁸	X	X	X	X
Friends Moldovans/Romanians	0.36*	X	X	X	X
Important personal matters Romanian/Moldovans	X	X	X	X	X
Roommates Romanian/Moldovans	X	X	X	X	X
Borrowing money	-1.14**	X	X	X	-1.53***

n: 167; Adjusted R squared: 0.074;
p-value: 0.0114

n: 163; Adjusted R squared: 0.10;
p-value: 0.001

The first set of regressions represented in the table above describes the relationship between personal relational web and fundamental group beliefs without relationship and sport variables being included. As we can see just two out of five models proved to be statistically significant to interpret.

The first model analyzes the relationship between personal relational web and the perceived difference between Moldovans and Romanians. We can observe that daily interactions have a completely opposite effect on fundamental beliefs as we would expect based on theory. The daily interaction variable is calculated by dividing the number of Moldovans individuals

¹⁷ Detailed information about models proved statistically significant from the present table can be found in the appendix 1, Tables 4 and 5

¹⁸ p - '***' 0.001 | '**' 0.01 | '*' 0.05 | '.' 0.1

interact on a daily basis by the number of Romanians they interact on a daily basis. Thus, the higher is the score, the more Moldovans are in the individual's daily interaction network. According to the model, an increase in the proportion of Moldovans/Romanians in the personal network of the individual will lead to a decrease by 0.32 points of perceived difference between Moldovans and Romanians. This finding comes totally unexpected since the theory argues for the opposite relationship. According to this finding if Moldovans will interact more with other Moldovans on a daily basis they will believe Moldovans to be more similar with Romanians. I will try to explain the present result at the end of this chapter.

The proportion of friends in the personal network of an individual seems to have also a statistically significant impact on perceived difference between Romanians and Moldovans. The same as in the first case, a higher value for this variable will mean a higher number of Moldovan friends in the personal network. Contrary to the previous finding, the present one confirms theoretical expectations that a diverse social network will decrease the perceived difference between the "own" group and the "others". An increase of one point for this variable will lead to an increase of 0.36 on the scale of perceived difference. So as we can conclude, if the proportion of Moldovan friends is higher then also the perception about Moldovans as being different from Romanians is higher. From this finding we can conclude that the proportion of friends in the personal network matters for the construction of a part of fundamental beliefs. People who have more Moldovan friends and less Romanians will tend to believe Moldovans as more different from Romanians.

The likelihood to predisposition to borrow money from a Moldovan or a Romanian also proved to have an important impact on perceived difference between Romanians and Moldovans. This variable is a dummy one, having two categories (1-Moldovan; 2- Doesn't matter). The same as for the second variable, the score from this relationship confirms my theoretical expectation. A change from 1 to 2 will lead to a decrease of 1.14 on the scale of

perceived differences. In other words, if a person have no preference from whom to borrow money, than he or she will be more likely to see fewer differences between Moldovans and Romanians.

It is important to remark that out of three variables that are statistically significant, the first one tell us just about how big the personal network is, without touching on weight of the network. On the other hand, friendship and borrowing money variables reflect more qualitative aspects of the network. Certainly the number of friends is a qualitative measure of the network, but at the same time it has a qualitative aspect which is tied to the definition of friendship and mapping the friends. Borrowing moneys, has no quantitative significance for the network since it is not measuring the proportions, nevertheless it has important qualitative aspects because it weights the readiness of a person to borrow money from someone who is not in the same predetermined by the kinship.

The second statistically significant model tells us about the relationship between interactions with people from the same region and personal relational web. As argued through the literature, territorial identification can be an important part of the fundamental belief; it is a very strong label which is not attached to behavioral characteristics. Mainly the provenience from the same region can be used as a strong identification marker which can bring people together and constitute the foundation of the social identity. Being an important part of the fundamental group belief I had constructing a model in order to observe if networking will have any impact on the present variable.

The model is statistically significant and we can be 99% certain that the results from the model did not occurred by chance ($p_{\text{model}} < 0.01$). As regarding substantial significance of the model we can see that it explains 10% variation in the dependent variable (R-squared: 0.10). A variation of 10% is certainly not something astonishing but certainly the results brought by

the model worth discussing. It seems that for territorial identification variable, just borrowing money holds a statistically significant explanatory power. For this case we can see that a change from value 1 to value 2 in this variable will lead to a decrease of 1.53 point on the importance of interacting with people from the same region. In other words, if persons are indifferent from whom to borrow money they will be less inclined to believe it important to interact with people from the same region as they. Again I would like to point out that judging from network analysis perspective; borrowing money is a qualitative characteristic of the network, which allows us to reflect on the fact that qualitative characteristics of the networks are quite important in order to understand fundamental group beliefs.


6.3.2 Personal relational web and fundamental group beliefs with relationship and sport variables included

In the first place I believe important to include sport and teammates as an important network variable which can explain variations in fundamental group beliefs. Nevertheless it proved that just none of the five models was statistically significant, thus at least for quantitative analysis it seems that sport/teammates has no effect on fundamental group beliefs.


The other series of regressions I have run was including the relationship variable. By including this variable my sample decreased, thus the number of cases which were included in the model was 61. Therefore the model ran for the persons who have a girlfriend or a wife. As we can observe from the table below three out of five models proved to be statistically significant.

Table 3. Relationship between Personal Relational Web and Fundamental Group Beliefs
(With Relationship and Sport Variables Included)¹⁹


	Perceived difference between Moldovan and Romanians	Necessity to promote group characteristic culture	Perceived unity and distinctiveness of the group	Label usage	Necessity to interact with people from the same region
Daily interactions Moldovans/Romanians	-0.14*** ²⁰	X	-0.15***	X	0.13**
Friends Moldovans/Romanians	0.13	X	X	X	X
Important personal matters Romanian/Moldovans	X	X	X	X	X
Roommates Romanian/Moldovans	X	X	X	X	X
Borrowing money	-1.98**	X	X	X	-2.03***
Relationship	X	X	X	X	X



n=61;
 Adjusted R-squared: 0.149
 p-value: 0.013



n=60;
 Adjusted R-squared: 0.082
 p-value: 0.080



n=59
 Adjusted R-squared: 0.1383
 p-value: 0.02489

Including the relationship variable in the model did not change radically the picture. We can see that fundamental group beliefs are influenced by the same networking variables as in previous models. However, for the present set of regressions we have another statistically significant model. It seems that perceived unity and distinctiveness of the group is influenced by the networking variables, particularly by the daily interaction variable. As in previous cases, more daily interactions a Moldovan will have with other Moldovans more predisposed the person will be to see Moldovans less united and distinct group.

¹⁹ Detailed information about models proved statistically significant from the present table can be found in the appendix 1, Tables 6, 7 and 8

²⁰ p - '***' 0.001 | '**' 0.01 | '*' 0.05 | '.' 0.1

Summarizing we can say that one important factor that seems to have impact on fundamental group beliefs it is the readiness to borrow money. It seems that persons who make no difference with respect to whom to borrow money from will be less attached to their fundamental group beliefs. Another variable which explains the variation in fundamental group beliefs variable is the proportion of Romanian/Moldovan friends. More Romanian friends a person will have, less likely this person will be to see Moldovans as different from Romanians.

One of the unexpected findings was related with daily interactions, persons who tend to interact more with Moldovans, will believe them to be less different from Romanians. It is hard to explain the present finding; however the main explication can be rooted in the character of the variable. The number of daily interactions is measuring just a quantitative aspect of the relational web, the number of interactions is therefore a simple representation of how many persons from a group you interact, and that can be interactions without choosing. In other words, living with person in a room will count as an interaction but will not represent anyhow a weighted and assumed relationship. Another explanation can be related with the fact that expectations from interactions with Moldovans are not fulfilled. Possible at the beginning of their stay in Romania, Moldovans expect other Moldovans to be closer to them and to reflect the main interests and desires. Because of that they are trying to construct their daily interactions around other Moldovans (staying in the same room, working together, etc.). After a period spent in Romania and diversifying their relational web they come to the point to be deceived in their expectations of Moldovans to be closer, therefore the daily interactions being there are just playing the opposite role, of deconstructing the image of the group as a unitary body. All in all those are just speculations since I have no data to support this ideas, however it can be a very interesting topic to go in-depth with some possible follow-up studies.

Relying on the findings we can say that diverse relational web will lead to the deconstruction or the weakening of some fundamental group beliefs. By doing so, diverse relational web will also weaken the hegemonic social identity which is constructed from those fundamental beliefs.

6.4 *Does diverse personal relational web influence the deconstruction of additional group beliefs?*

Additional group beliefs are an important component of the social identity. They constitute behavioral arguments that influence or enforce fundamental group beliefs. Even though we would expect people which engage in a diverse relational web to change also their additional group beliefs, statistical data which I gathered for Romania present no evidence to sustain this expectation.

For my research I measure additional group beliefs through three different questions in the questionnaires. One of them addresses the matter of involvement in the group activities, second the attachment to the religious tradition and the third measures the trustfulness of Moldovans as compared to the others. Since all three questions are different even thematically and address completely different issues I ran regression for each of them separately. As in the previous cases I had two sets of regression, one without relationship and sport variable included and one with those included.

After running all the regressions I found no statistically significant model to discuss. There is no relationship between personal relational web and additional group beliefs, at least for the quantitative data gathered. However I will address in a detailed way this aspect relying on the interviews. Certainly there is no possibility for generalization just relying on four interviews,

but it is important to discuss some aspects which can help us in understanding why there was no relationship identified between personal relational web and additional group beliefs at the statistical data level.

It is quite an interesting situation, to find relationship between some fundamental group beliefs and personal relational web, and not to find any statistically significant relationship between additional group beliefs and personal relational web. There can be different causes of this lack of relation, it can be related with the questions from the questioner, or it can be related with the lack of any interaction between the two sets of variables. Although both scenarios are possible I believe that it is related mostly with the difficulty to measure behavioral aspects of a social identity through questioners. For this reason interviews can serve as a good source in finding the most important aspects of additional group beliefs of a social identity.

“You [Moldovans] are Russians” – that was the statement one of the interviewees characterized Romanian’s perception about Moldovans. As Bob puts it *“they think we are Russians, they say: “you are traveling with tanks back in Moldova”*” (appendix 2, table 9), it is an important remark because other’s perception about the group identity is as important as group members’ identity, we can see that in Laitin’s definition. However the identification with Russians does not come just from the outside, John remarks that: *“We are different because we were influenced by Russians, even the holidays, like 9th of May are borrowed from the Russians”* (appendix2, table 9), this perception was confirmed also by all other interviewed. As we can see the “Russianess” is an important aspect attributed to Moldovans from outside or even from themselves.

It is interesting however when we think of the fact that Moldovans speak the same language as Romanians, and have similar cultural attributes, to have them classified closer to Russians. This classification is certainly picturing an important additional group belief. It cannot be considered as fundamental group belief since it is not strictly characteristic or determines the sense of the group, at the same time it is linked with some behavioral expectation being violent in some way: *“Moldovans respect their word because they fear the violence you can apply to them, which is also a matter of education and of our past”* – Dan (appendix 2, table 10) or closer to personal worldview in the others: *“Russians are better than Romanians, Russians will always help you, and Romanians will not”* – Bob (appendix 2, table 9). It is a hard measurable aspect because explicitly Moldovans have little or no incentive to identify themselves as Russians, in the interviews however they were not asked to do that, but merely present their own opinion if there are some difference between Romanian and Moldovans. In this respect it is hard to measure the relationship between additional group beliefs and personal relational web through statistical data.

The second type of aspects the interviews brought to light are related with the culture of respecting the promise. The “promise” culture may sound quite strange but it seems to be important to Moldovans: *“They [Romanians] are not respecting their word; we were raised like that – to be responsible for your words”* – John (appendix 2, table 9). The distinction here is the responsibility taken for the promises, it seems that one of the behavior characteristics identified and attached to Moldovans is this responsibility. In my questionnaires I addressed this issue through questions related to trust, but most probably those were understood in a different way. On the other hand addressing a direct question about the culture of promising would lead to a direct affirmative answer. It was not a desirable outcome since it is important not to just identify a specific additional group belief but also to observe how silent it is. Presenting the persons with a direct assessment of a

specific additional group belief would brought affirmative responses without a reliable assessment of its salience.

From the interviews we also observe that violence is considered another behavioral characteristic of Moldovans in Romania. Certainly they are not picturing themselves as violent people, but they state in a proudly manner the fact that Romanians consider them “tough”. In this respect Iren also observes that people have a different image regarding Moldovans *“People have a pre-conception about Bessarabian, they are drinking, they are fighting”* – Iren (appendix 2, table 10). It is also observable that violence is considered somehow attached to responsibility *“Moldovans respect their word because they fear the violence you can apply to them, which is also a matter of education and of our past”* – Dan (appendix 2, table 10). This characteristic also can be attached to additional group beliefs, it mostly displays a behavioral characteristic which Moldovans attached to themselves or they believe others to attach to them.

Certainly I will not invent any relationship between personal relational web and additional group beliefs since it is not found in my statistical data. However I would be also skeptical to a complete lack of this relationship, as I have already presented, additional group beliefs are harder to find and those usually come within the in-deep interviews, because of that it was hard to operationalize this concept, therefore the results may lack some precision. Nevertheless I believe interesting even the findings from the interviews, without being able to generalize those; we still enrich our knowledge about additional group beliefs which can be found for a group. Findings from the interviews can be a good basis for further researches on the subject of identity, however for the present study I have to acknowledge that the data I have gathered do not show any relationship between diverse networking and additional group beliefs, thus the hypothesis H2.2 is false, and we can state that diverse personal relational web does not influence hegemonic identity deconstruction through additional group beliefs.

So, can diverse personal relational web influence the identity deconstruction? Unfortunately there is no straight forward “Yes” or “No” answer to this questions. Diverse personal relational web influences the deconstruction, or the weakening of some of fundamental group beliefs. It is clear through the analysis of the empirical data that such variables as proportion of friends, proportion of daily interaction or readiness to borrow money can be important in explaining variation in fundamental group beliefs. However, I failed in finding any relationship between diverse personal relational web and additional group beliefs. That occurred because of the problems with measurement tool. It is a difficult task to measure additional group beliefs through questioners, and even though I identified the main additional beliefs through interviews my operationalization through questionnaires failed to bring the

Conclusions

Are Moldovans different from Romanians? And if so, can this socially constructed social identity be deconstructed through diverse personal relational web? These are the two central questions of the present research. According to the empirical evidences we can answer positively both questions. As the analysis shows, Moldovans do display a different social identity from Romanians. The answer to the second question is not so straight forward since we can say that diverse personal relational web can influence just some characteristics of fundamental group beliefs and none of the additional group beliefs. However, it is quite an interesting finding because we can say that to a particular degree we can modify social identities of individuals by changing their interaction patterns.

From the beginning of the present research one can have an impression that I take Moldovans to be different from Romanian as a proved fact. Although I expect this situation to occur I did not start the inquiry with this assumption. Addressing the question of whether Moldovans are different from Romanians allowed me to discuss of important difference relying on empirical findings and securing myself from any speculations. On this first research questions, the literature and empirical data from Moldova and Romania show quite clearly that Moldovans are different in some important ways from Romanians. Working in the theoretical framework I can say that Moldovans are different at both: fundamental and additional group beliefs levels. At the fundamental group beliefs level the differences are related first of all with the dialect and the territorial affiliation. At the same time, Moldovans consider themselves different regarding behavioral aspects such as use of violence, attachment to Russian culture, or knowledge of Russian language. Certainly, the differences they identified are not as big as for example differences one can identify between Estonians and Russians. That fact is completely understandable in the present case since both Romanians and Moldovans share

mostly the same language, culture, or religious characteristics. In other words there is no clear ethnic difference between the two groups. All in all the answer to the first question presented us very clear arguments for discussing “Moldovan” social identity in Romania as a distinct social identity which characterize a specific social group.

Moving forward, the present researched inquired into the deconstruction of social identities, particularly: can diverse personal relational web deconstruct “Moldovan” social identity? The main empirical findings present us with a very interesting situation where diverse personal relational web can change Moldovans’ perception about themselves and about Romanians. Certainly we have the case where daily interactions variable showed presented results which were against theoretical expectation. However, as it was already addressed, I believe the present variable to lack important qualitative details of the personal relational web; therefore it is hard to interpret in a meaningful way the findings from this relation. On the other hand I found no statistical evidence that diverse networking influences additional group beliefs. Although I cannot go further with this statement and speculate on some possible results, I would like to point out that the result might not reflect very well the real situation. As we observed, individuals identified some important behavioral differences between Romanians and Moldovans. The problem was that those differences were surprised by in-depth interviews and not within the questionnaires. Because of that, the relationship between diverse personal relational web and additional group beliefs was just partially uncovered since it was a challenging task to operationalize additional group beliefs through questionnaires.

Relying on empirical findings from the present study we can say that H1 held true. Because of the specific social and cultural background, Moldovans have a different social identity. As regarding second research question, does diverse networking influence social identity, H2 is partially true. Although I succeeded finding interesting relationship between personal

relational web and fundamental group beliefs, I failed in finding the same kind of relationship between personal relational web and additional group beliefs. All in all empirical evidences are supporting the theoretical argument. First of all both questionnaires and interviews identified clear characteristics of fundamental and additional group beliefs as important factors of a social identity. Going further, we found out that at least at the level of fundamental group beliefs, diverse personal relational web can lead to a deconstruction of the hegemonic social identity.

The present research along with the results presents a new approach to the identity study field. The novelty of the research relies first of all in the theoretical framework. Combining different approaches to identity ((Bar-Tal and Danies 1998), (Laitin 1998), (Brubaker and Cooper 2000), (Erikson 1968)) I constructed a theoretical foundation which allows for a research into social identities disregarding the ethnic variable and paying specific attention to the personal relational web. In the present context of evolving interconnectedness of the society we cannot disregard personal relational web and its impact on social identity of individuals. Also the theoretical argument allows for further developments, along with the research on the deconstruction of the hegemonic identity we could, and certainly should look into the possible construction of the multiple identities, or to look also on the hierarchical structuring of those identities after the weakening of the hegemonic identity. Another important novelty of the present research is the possibility to link theoretical foundation with empirical research. It is a difficult task to study or research in an empirical way identity, in my research I combined qualitative and quantitative tools in order to have a valuable research on a big-N cases sample. Certainly it had its own problems, however judging by the results it proved to be a valuable start which can be capitalized in further researches.

The whole argument of the paper can be brought to a bigger context, if we will succeed to interconnect people in diverse relational networks and broke kin-based networks we will

succeed also to shape their identity toward a more “opened” identity schemata. Even though the study took the case of Moldovans in Romania as a good one since there is no ethnic difference between the groups, I believe the structure of the theoretical argument, and the methodological approach can be applied also for the social groups which are ethnically different, or for the second, third generation of migrants. The novelty of the theoretical argument and of the whole argument as such is rooted in the fact that it can be applied to a diverse range of cases. The combination of the theoretical and methodological approaches, along with the questions asked allow us to move much further, we can even ask the implication of this identity change for such factors as social capital or its influence on construction of cross-cutting cleavages. As regarding the case of Moldovans in Romania it also should be viewed in a broader context. The acquirement of citizenship of another country and cross-border movements based on the kinship or ethnic ties is quite **present** in the Eastern Europe, for this matter one can look closely at the case of Romanians in Ukraine, Hungarians in Romania, Serbia and Ukraine, Russians in all post-Soviet republics.

The present paper can have broader implication on all three levels theoretical, methodological and empirical. The main theoretical schemata and the theoretical development are opened to any kind of research. Methodologically, the paper presents us with a complex research design, based on different methods for data collection and analysis. Last but not the least the case studied allows for further developments and a broader framing of the issue. However, the most important finding of the present research is certainly related to the importance personal networks can have upon individual’s social identity. Changing relational paradigms we can change self-perception of yourself and of your own social group, therefore yes, we can “break” social identities through diverse personal relational web.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Regression Models for Personal Relational Web and Fundamental group beliefs

Table 4. Perceived difference between Moldovans and Romanians and Personal Relational Web.

Relationship and sport variables excluded		
<i>Variables</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Intercept	5.1	1.2e-14***
Daily interactions	-0.32	0.03*
Bessarabians/Romanians		
Friends Bessarabians/Romanians	0.36	0.01*
Important personal matters Bessarabians/Romanians	-0.04	0.60
Roomates Bessarabians/Romanins	-0.05	0.72
Borrowing money from someone (1-Moldovan, 2-Doesn't matter)	-1.14	0.00**
Time in Romania	0.12	0.3

p - '***' 0.001 | '**' 0.01 | '*' 0.05 | '.' 0.1

n=167

Multiple R-squared: 0.132; Adjusted R-squared: 0.074; p-value: 0.0114

Table 5. Interactions with people from the same region and Diverse relational web.

Relationship and sport variables excluded		
<i>Variables</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Intercept	7.50	<2e-16***
Daily interactions	-0.05	0.81
Bessarabians/Romanians		
Friends Bessarabians/Romanians	0.17	0.40
Important personal matters Bessarabians/Romanians	-0.12	0.34
Roomates Bessarabians/Romanins	-0.13	0.24
Borrowing money from someone (1-Moldovan, 2-Doesn't matter)	-1.53	0.00***
Time in Romania	-0.01	0.93

p - '***' 0.001 | '**' 0.01 | '*' 0.05 | '.' 0.1

n=163

Multiple R-squared: 0.173; Adjusted R squared: 0.10; p-value: 0.001

Table 6. Perceived difference between Moldovans and Romanians and Personal Relational Web.

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Intercept	7.44	<5.93e-15***
Daily interactions	0.14	0.00***
Bessarabians/Romanians		
Friends Bessarabians/Romanians	0.13	0.11
Important personal matters Bessarabians/Romanians	0.05	0.83
Roomates Bessarabians/Romanians	-0.59	0.4
Borrowing money from someone (1-Moldovan, 2-Doesn't matter)	-1.98	0.01**
Time in Romania	-0.67	0.87
Relationship		

p - '***' 0.001 | '**' 0.01 | '*' 0.05 | '.' 0.1

n=61

Multiple R-squared: 0.226; Adjusted R-squared: 0.1499

p-value: 0.0131

Table 7. Bessarabians – United and Distinct Group and Personal Relational Web.

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Intercept	5.15	<2.67e-08***
Daily interactions	0.15	0.00***
Bessarabians/Romanians		
Friends Bessarabians/Romanians	0.09	0.35
Important personal matters Bessarabians/Romanians	0.10	0.73
Roomates Bessarabians/Romanians	-0.23	0.47
Borrowing money from someone (1-Moldovan, 2-Doesn't matter)	-0.08	0.98
Time in Romania	-0.20	0.49
Relationship	-1.13	0.26

p - '***' 0.001 | '**' 0.01 | '*' 0.05 | '.' 0.1

n=60

Multiple R-squared: 0.1663; Adjusted R-squared: 0.08295; p-value: 0.08041

Table 8. Necessity to interact with people from the same region and Personal Relational Web.

Relationship variable included		
<i>Variables</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Intercept	7.77	5.33e-09***
Daily interactions Bessarabians/Romanians	0.13	0.01**
Friends Bessarabians/Romanians	0.11	0.18
Important personal matters Bessarabians/Romanians	0.08	0.74
Roomates Bessarabians/Romanians	-0.43	0.14
Borrowing money from someone (1-Moldovan, 2-Doesn't matter)	-2.03	0.00***
Time in Romania	-0.10	0.70
Relationship	0.77	0.38

p - '***' 0.001 | '**' 0.01 | '*' 0.05 | '.' 0.1

n=59

Multiple R-squared: 0.2011; Adjusted R-squared: 0.1383; p-value: 0.02489

Appendix 2. Questionnaire, Interview Guide and the Summary of the Interviews

Measurement tool 1, Questionnaire.

Measuring Fundamental Group Beliefs, Additional Group Beliefs and Personal Relational Web

- How often do you mention that you are from Moldova when introducing to a new person?
 - Often,
 - Not so often
 - Not at all
 - Don't know/Don't want to answer
- In which context do you mention that you are from Moldova? (opened question)
- On a scale from 1 to 10, how different are Bessarabians from Romanians? (1 – not different; 10 – very different)
- On a scale from 1 to 10 (1 – do not agree; 10 – totally agree), how much do you agree with the following statements?
 - Bessarabians should promote their own culture within Romanian society
 - Bessarabians are an united and distinct group within Romanians society
- Explain in few words what the word “Bessarabian” means for you?
- Which are the most important characteristics of Bessarabians from the city you are studying?
- Have you applied/do you hold Romanian citizenship at the present moment?
 - Yes I have applied/I hold Romanian citizenship
 - No I did not applied/ I don't hold Romanian citizenship
 - Don't know/Don't want to answer
- On a scale from 1 to 10 (1 – not important; 10 – very important), how important is for you to interact with peoples from the same region/city/country as you?

9. If you would have to initiate a business with a Romanian or with a Moldovan, whom would you choose?
 - a. A Romanian
 - b. A Moldovan
 - c. Does not matter
10. On a scale from 1 to 10 (1 – no trust at all; 10 – very much trust), how much would you trust following categories?
 - a. Bessarabians
 - b. Romanians
 - c. People in general
11. How often you participate at events organized by the Bessarabian community from your city?
 - a. Weekly
 - b. Several times a month
 - c. Once in a half a year
 - d. Once in a year
 - e. Do not participate
 - f. Don't know/Don't want to answer
12. According to which calendar do you celebrate religious holidays?
 - a. Julian
 - b. Gregorian
 - c. Do not celebrate
13. How many Romanian friends you can say you have?
14. How many Bessarabian friends you can say you have?
15. With how many people you interact on a daily basis?
16. How many of those are Romanians?
17. How many of those are Moldovans?
18. With how many persons you can discuss important personal matters?
19. How many of those are Romanians?
20. How many of those are Moldovans?
21. Do you practice any team sport?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know/don't want to answer
22. How many teammates are Romanians?
23. How many teammates are Moldovans?
24. Do you share the apartment/room with other persons?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know/don't want to answer
25. How many of your roommates are Moldovans?
26. How many of you roommates are Romanians?
27. Do you have a girlfriend/wife?
 - d. Yes
 - e. No
 - f. Don't know/don't want to answer
28. Is she from
 - a. Moldova
 - b. Romania

- c. Don't know/don't want to answer
- 29. If you would need financial help, to who would you go first of all?
 - a. A Moldovan friend
 - b. A Romanian friend
 - c. Doesn't matter
 - d. Don't know/don't want to answer
- 30. Age
- 31. Gender
- 32. Occupation
 - a. Student
 - b. Employed
 - c. Unemployed
 - d. Other situation
- 33. For how long are you staying in Romania
 - a. Less than a year
 - b. Between 1-2 years
 - c. Between 2-3 years
 - d. Between 3-4 years
 - e. More than 4 years
- 34. In which city are you living?
 - a. Bucharest
 - b. Cluj-Napoca

Measurement tool 2. Interview.

Topic guide for semi-structured interviews exploring the question of social identity for Moldovans in Romania.²¹

[My name is Sorin Cebotari, I am a second MA student, at Political Science Department at Central European University in Budapest. I am writing my thesis about the importance communications and personal interaction can have on perception about the self and accommodation in Romania. In order to have a clear picture of this issue I would like to ask you to tell me more about some particular issues I am interested on. Even though the format of the discussion may resemble one of a semi-structured interview, I would like to encourage you to bring into discussion whatever issues you consider important in the context of the present discussion. The responses I will gather will be used strictly in academic interests and I will change the personal details in order to guaranty you the anonymity.]

Part 1. Introductory questions

1. Where are you from Moldova?
2. Why did you decided to come to Romania to study?
3. Did you know somebody from here before coming to Romania?
4. What are you studying? Tell me more about your impression of Romania

²¹ The present guide is translated from Romanian and represents a structure which guided mostly the interviews. Since the interviews were more opened some of the questions where addressed directly, some were not, depending on the situation, therefore the structure of the guide should be understood more as a guide of the discussion.

Part 2. Perception of the “self” and of the “others”

5. Have you had any problems with adaptation when you came in Romania? (in detail)
6. In your opinion, are Moldovans different somehow from Romanians? (Why?)
7. What are the most important characteristics of a Moldovan?
8. What do you think Romanians think about Moldovans?
9. Are there any cultural differences between Romanians and Moldovans?

Part 3. Networks and trust

10. Would you be more inclined to trust a Moldovan than a Romanian? (why)
11. How do you prefer to spend you free time? (with whom?)
12. If you would have to borrow money to a person or to borrow from a person, does it matter is he/she is Romanian or Moldovan? (why)

Part 4. Closing part

13. What do you want to do after graduation/in the near future?
14. Any other questions if interested.

Table 9. Summary of the interviews with the main findings on the researched subject
John and Bob's answers

	John	Bob
Main differences between Romanian and Moldovans	<p>I act differently here, they are not respecting their word, we were raised like that to be responsible for your words.</p> <p>We have a specific dialect, we can speak Romanian, but when we are speaking with Moldovans we have speaking in a different dialect.</p> <p>We are different, even the food is somehow different.</p> <p>We are different because we were influenced by Russians, even the holidays, like 9th of May.</p>	<p>There is a big difference, culture friendship, they are not so friendlier.</p> <p>We are more united, I don't think that will be a Romanian to come and to ask you to help.</p> <p>Different religion.</p> <p>Language is totally different Romanians do not understand us.</p> <p>Tradition and culture are different</p> <p>You can talk always Russian with Moldovans</p> <p>Russians are better than Romanians, Russians will always help you, and Romanians will not</p> <p>There is an important difference in the way we interact, speak.</p> <p>Romanians thinks we are tough.</p> <p>We are behaving differently, they are swearing a lot, if you talk like that in Moldova you would got beaten a lot for that.</p> <p>They don't want to understand our accent</p> <p>And when they were talking so fast I did not understood them.</p> <p>They think we are Russians, they say you are traveling with tanks back in Moldova</p> <p>They are not drinking so much tea, they are mostly about coffee and cigarettes</p>
Similitudes		

Interactions	At the beginning I was selecting to interact with people from the same region because of the cultural shock You think he is Moldovan and he will understand me, but after a period you got to understand it is not like that They are quite interested to know our culture, Moldovan culture	Moldovans are more 90/10%
Trustfulness	It is hard to trust them; they were educated different from us.	You cannot trust Romanians, 90/10% They are promising you something, and they forget, it happens to Moldovans as well but not so many times. It is mostly about education. I would never trust to borrow money from a Romanian.
Identification	Sometime it is important to say that you are from Moldova You are Russians, that what they say to us. For me Moldova is like identification with the family. For me it is important where I come from.	Education It is very important for me that I am Moldovan. Because I was born there and I grew there.
Label	I don't care about the nationality when introducing myself	Moldovan, clear using of the label Student

Table 10 Summary of the interviews with the main findings on the researched subject
Dan and Iren's answers

	Dan	Iren
Main differences between Romanian and Moldovans	There is difference Different TV shows, it is more interesting for me to watch something in Russian. Also at the level of jokes We are differently about communication; we are accustomed to different types of dialogues. The differences are not so big, at the level of practical issues there are no big differences I have some disappointments regarding Romania and Romanians, we are accustomed to different way of thinking and working The dialect Russian influence We have a more archaic sense of culture, for us family is more important than for them. Moldovans respect their word because they fear the violence you can apply to them, which is also a matter of education and of our past	People have a pre-conception about Bessarabian, they are drinking, and they are fighting. I didn't want people to think of me as an uneducated, dumb or a whore. Everybody say to me that they will never think that I am from Moldova. You can see the difference between a Moldovan and a Romanian, even in the way they approach a girl. The difference is even in the way they think about the family. Romanians seem to be more traditionalists, they are more attached to the family. I treated Romanians as superior from the beginning, considering them smarter, more educated. Moldovans think of themselves as united, and helpful to each other. Romanians are in their country, they don't have to prove anything, I had to prove that I worth respect. I still have my accent, and there are some inside jokes which cannot change.
Similarities	There is no difference in terms of	Both, Romanians and Moldovans are partying

	culture. We are partying the same, having the same type of friendship.	the same, having the same way of spending their time
Interactions		
Trustfulness	There is no big difference, I have met different types of persons	I would trust more a Romanian, Moldovan community is small and after that everybody knows what you had done, or where you went
Identification	It is ok to talk about the Moldovans in Romania just in the first 1-2 years, after the accommodation period, just the accent can make you different	
Label	Just in cases we are talking in a familiarity. It is not a determinant issue into a discussion It is not something that would advantage or disadvantage you	I'm not saying that I am from Moldova

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